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John McMahon

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**A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF
THE MANAGEMENT OF RETENTION
AT AN INSTITUTE OF FURTHER
AND HIGHER EDUCATION
IN NORTHERN IRELAND.**

Thesis for the award of the

Doctor of Education (EdD)

September 25 2006

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I dedicate this thesis to you all.

ABSTRACT

This research is a case study concerning retention in Further and Higher Education (FHE) generally and an Institute of Further and Higher Education in particular. This college will be fictitiously referred to as Lough Neagh Institute (LNIFHE).

Retention is becoming increasingly important in education as it affects achievement with implications for any value added which could be gained and the overall provision of quality given to the learner. Poor retention generally results in a depleted range of skills acquired by the student. A policy on the management of retention has not yet been formally constructed, despite overall retention within LNIFHE developing a distinctive downward trend in some courses.

Initially a review of the literature indicated that the most pertinent areas to investigate in the management of retention were;

- factors involved in early withdrawal,**
- support and guidance processes,**
- quality systems as well as,**
- strategies that were employed to optimise retention at LNIFHE.**

The four aims of the study were built around these areas. To test opinion on some of these themes a sample of the three stakeholders most directly involved, the staff, students and senior management at LNIFHE during the years 2004-2005 was surveyed and collated. The methodology involved the techniques of questionnaires, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, contemporaneous comments recorded in the diary and desk analysis.

The investigation also studied the strategy employed to optimise retention by management at LNIFHE by examining some retention related policies from within the College Development Plan. The school improvement model of Creemers was analysed and found to be a useful tool, which could be adapted for use in LNIFHE. A variant of the model was proposed in the final chapter.

Retention research so far has been of an a-theoretical nature and generally does not account for the cumulative and interrelating effects of the external and internal factors which are known to be influential on students. The most important dimension which emerged in this study was the importance of motivation for students and how this is positively influenced by better support provision. Within LNIFHE, there are differences in the perspectives of the three main stakeholders notably in the area of quality provision and partially as a result of this, implementation gaps between policy and practice exist with consequent negative implications for student retention. There is no procedure in LNIFHE for the identification of students who are at risk of withdrawing.

Some structural and organisational changes such as the construction of a retention policy the creation of the post of retention manager along with recommendation for improved monitoring, support and the maintenance of quality at all levels were suggested. It was proposed that better communication between the 3 stakeholders at LNIFHE will improve motivation of staff and students which will have a beneficial effect on retention.

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Glossary of Acronyms

Best Estimate of Trustworthiness	BET
Department of Education	DE
Further Education	FE
Further and Higher Education	FHE
Higher Education	HE
General Certificate in Secondary Education	GCSE
Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education	AVCE
Further Education Funding Council	FEFC
Information Communications Technology	ICT
Her Majesty's Inspectorate	HMI
Department for Education and Skills	DFES
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed	SMART
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education	NATFHE
Performance Indicators	PI
Full Time Equivalent	FTE
Student Produced Unit of Resource	SPURS
Management Information System	MIS
Pro-Active Student Support	PASS
Head of School	HOS
College Development Plan	CDP
Improving Quality: Raising Standards	IQ: RS
East Down Institute of Further and Higher Education	LNIFHE
Learning and Skills Development Agency	LSDA
Further Education Development Agency.	FEDA
Department of Education and Learning	DEL
Open University	OU
Total Quality Management	TQM
Educational Maintenance Allowance	EMA
Initial Report	IR
Education and Training Inspectorate	ETI
Support, Quality, Opportunity, Time	SQOT
Institute for Public Policy Research	IPPR
National Foundation for Educational Research	NFER

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will begin with short descriptions of the context, subject, focus and purpose of the study and end with a statement of the aims and research questions to be addressed.

The Context for the Study

The organisational context for this study is a college of further and higher education in Northern Ireland. A multi - campus institute, LNIFHE serves an adult population of over 75,000 people. We are sensitive to the influences of the Department of Education, (DE) who provide inspections which form part of our appraisal, to political changes as well as to our markets, which consist of both public and business. LNIFHE is a competitor for these markets with, for example, training agencies, schools and private employers. We must also respond to new or emerging markets and provide a quality educational service. Our core purpose is to provide for the educational needs of all our students within the local geographical area. LNIFHE has a hierarchical structure with a Director, three Assistant Directors, six heads of school, one head of training, 19 principal and senior lecturers, 60 lecturers and 60 support staff. A detailed diagram of the management structure can be found in appendix 1.1. The six schools span the curriculum and together contain approximately 1480 full time and 8200 part-time students, 8000 of whom are over 19. The author's school, Applied Science has 11 lecturers, three of whom are senior tutors in charge of the different subject areas. LNIFHE delivers 'A' Levels through the schools of Applied Science and Humanities as well as AVCE, GCSE, ACCESS and some adult/vocational courses in the remaining schools of Built Environment, Business, Education and Training, as well as Informatics and Design.

The Subject of the Study, Retention

Since the early 1990's, student retention coupled with funding and access has become increasingly important as an area of concern to Government, the providing institutions and the students affected - those who do not complete a course. To foster and maintain national efficiency with a highly skills-based economy, successive Governments have striven to ensure that the education system produces skilled and educated graduates from both the further and higher education institutions. In addition, pressure is continually being applied to the providers to demonstrate value for money by minimising waste, defined to be those students who fail to complete their course or do not achieve their targets. Since Incorporation in the FE sector in the early 1990s, retention and achievement have been rewarded whereas early withdrawal and non-achievement have been penalised. The granting of funding at three stages in the academic year, i.e. enrolment, after two months' attendance and successful completion of a course, was the mechanism that produced this scenario. This strategy of staggering funding helped to sharpen the resolve of the FE management teams to minimise waste and maximise retention.

Government policies, for example the House of Commons Sixth Report, (2001) and others, informed by reports such as Kennedy (1997) have sought to widen and increase overall student participation. This coupled with the new FE funding rules along with HE student loans and top-up fees have therefore changed the further and higher education landscape dramatically. Kennedy (1997 p.17) states "the government should recognise and celebrate the unique contribution that further education can make to widening participation and create a consistent policy framework for publicly-funded further education which embraces planning, funding, quality assessment, measurement of performance, financial support for students, guidance and the means of stimulating demand for learning"

This area ranks high in the table of Noble Indices (2005), which indicate raised levels of deprivation. This has implications for LNIFHE with added pressure on students to become economically independent.

Focus and Purpose of the Study

This author is concerned that retention rates within LNIFHE and across the FE sector generally have declined to the extent that both examination results and value added to students are threatened. As this is of central importance in LNIFHE's aim to strive for the provision of quality and academic excellence, it is clear that more comprehensive information on retention rates is needed, for example the reasons for their decline or explanations for and factors involved in student drop – out. These reasons could be, for example financial – the student had to leave college to work to pay bills or poor advice – the student was placed on the wrong course. This study has conducted an analysis of the management of retention – for example strategies to improve retention, monitoring attendance, quality provision, which should therefore help to determine whether and what further action is required to improve retention at LNIFHE. The effectiveness model of Creemers (1994) was studied and a new variant, suitable for use within a retention strategy in LNIFHE is explained in chapter 6. In this way it is hoped that the study has made an original contribution to advancing knowledge and understanding of the response to retention in an FHE college, which may have wider relevance to similar institutions.

Since the mid 1990's, the new funding arrangements in the FE sector elevated the importance of retention for managers in the sector. The recognition of the importance of retention for both students' success and funding encouraged the employment of, for example improved induction procedures and tracking mechanisms to minimise student dropout. How these mechanisms and other factors influenced student retention and how LNIFHE managed this evolving process were important questions that needed to be addressed.

All of our tutors agreed that retention was a serious issue. Although lecturers properly maintain registers, no systematic analysis of overall attendance rates or retention has been made by either tutors or senior management. Any analysis should concern itself with those students who have both poor and excellent attendance/retention

rates. This is because those who have the best attendance rates may highlight examples of good practice either by the students or staff – e.g. good learning/teaching strategies or by the institute – e.g. effective quality assurance or learning support mechanisms that can then be more widely applied and improved. In contrast, the students with the lowest rates may give reasons for their poor attendance or early drop out – this could highlight the possible indicators of poor practice and thus provide opportunities for improvement.

Characteristics associated with students having either excellent or poor attendance emerged and were analysed. The net result may be the production of a wider and more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing retention than otherwise would be the case.

During an interview with this author in May 2002 the Director described recruitment, attendance and retention rates in the three Key Skills areas of Communication Application of Number and ICT, as well as GCSE and some AVCE courses as “disappointing”. This project attempted to establish what measures were used to lead senior managers to this conclusion of “disappointing”. The research study therefore examined the generation and application of performance indicators relating to retention. In addition, an analysis of the curricular support and pastoral care, as well as arrangements for quality control and assurance was undertaken.

As the purpose of this study was to review and analyse the management of retention at LNIFHE, it was important to canvass and explore the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups involved - the students, tutors and senior management. These views may be very different to each other, as has been found to be the case in other research studies highlighted in the literature review chapter. The subsequent analysis of similarities and differences in stakeholder views and perspectives should yield interesting and important information for this project. On a wider scale, it is hoped that this research study may also contribute to the improvement in the management of pastoral care and quality provision. As well as

enhancing the value added given to students, a better retention strategy will improve the success and effectiveness of our institute.

Aims and Research Questions

Aim 1 To identify and examine the main factors involved in retention / early withdrawal.

Research Questions

- 1.1 What performance indicators have been employed by management to measure retention since 2000?
- 1.2 What is the opinion of management and staff regarding use of these performance indicators?
- 1.3 What is the opinion of current management, students and staff regarding the main factors pertaining to retention?

AIM 2 To analyse the specific student support and guidance processes which impact on retention

Research Questions

- 2.4 How are guidance and support managed both at student induction and during the academic year?
- 2.5 What is the view of current management, students and staff in relation to the effectiveness of these support and guidance procedures?

AIM 3 To analyse how quality control and assurance measures influence retention.

Research Questions

- 3.6 Which features of the quality control and assurance mechanisms are influential on retention?
- 3.7 How are these processes managed?
- 3.8 What are the views of current staff and students of the strengths and weaknesses of those aspects of quality control and assurance mechanisms that impact on retention?

AIM 4 To identify strategies for improving the management of retention at LNIFHE.

Research Question

- 4.9 What strategies are employed by management to improve retention and how could these strategies be improved or made more effective?

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review will begin with an analysis of the background research on student retention in the schools sector. The author will look at the school effectiveness and improvement literature generally (e.g. Creemers, 1991, 1994 and Reynolds *et al.*, 1996) and the post 16 group in particular (e.g. McCoy and Smyth 2005) as it relates to retention. The remainder of the chapter will review published work in the areas of retention in the Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) sectors and view some research performed outside the UK. As this study is set in the FE sector, particular attention will be paid to this section, with analysis of the perspectives and motivation of students and staff, feeder schools, the modern tutor's role, target setting and the financial dimension. Following a discussion of the themes of organisational issues and the potential role of college information systems to optimise retention, a detailed report on quality management in FHE will be presented. After a report on success and performance indicators, some strategies to improve retention will be discussed followed by a short section dedicated to the perspectives and opinion of the three major stakeholders. Finally, a detailed look at the model of Creemers (1994) will be presented followed by a general summary of the findings and main themes of the chapter.

Retention in the Schools Sector

In this sector students are younger and more prone to both parental influence and the effects of puberty than young adults in FHE. Attendance in schools until the age of 16 is compulsory and finance is a relatively minor component affecting retention in these years. Much of the early (pre-1985) literature on attendance/retention related to schools, was written by psychologists or psychiatrists, referred to particular specialist studies and was not applicable to the general pupil population (Galloway, 1985). In his study, Galloway (1985 p.121) maintained that "any hope for a solution, or even partial solution to the attendance problem.... lies in the school". This

statement gives a rationale for case studies such as this one - i.e. research within this institute. He further argues that a co-operative partnership between teachers and the educational, social and support services is necessary, although it will “in itself, do little to improve overall attendance unless accompanied by rigorous analysis of what the school is trying to achieve, not just for its less willing customers, but for all its pupils” (Galloway, 1985 p.122). Gray (Gray et al, 1980) argued that absenteeism is extremely influential in harming academic achievement because the students involved performed less well in examinations after missing much of the relevant teaching.

A ‘whole school’ system of student support has been advocated - “The pastoral system must respond effectively and promptly to meet the needs of pupils” (Holland and Hamerton 1997). Works by Marland (1974), Hamblin (1978) and Rutter et al (1979) contained useful suggestions on the development of school or college strategies for improving attendance. These indicated that a strategy for improvement was possible and that the answer lay within the individual school. This point also emerges in the Further and Higher Education literature review below. These earlier works, however, may not be as easily applicable to the situation in FHE today although Martinez (1995) suggested that schools and colleges possess the power to influence student outcomes regarding retention.

More recently, authors have researched the problem of ‘drop-out’ or ‘non attendance’ in schools by investigating factors that could be responsible for this. For example, in a study of students’ positive and negative attitudes towards education, Keys and Fernandes (1993) surveyed years 7 and 9 in two stratified samples of 75 mixed gender secondary schools each across England and Wales and found that generally time spent on homework was strongly associated with a positive attitude towards school. Some interesting differences between boys and girls relating to their performances and retention at school have emerged in research. For example in a study of

exclusion from schools, (DfEE, 2001) the authors reported that numbers of pupils (boys and girls) excluded from school have been increasing recently with most attention being focused on boys, who form the vast majority of those formally excluded. This study featured interviews with girls and a range of professionals, and examined their perceptions of school life as well as exclusion in its various forms.

The research found that:

- Girls are generally not a priority in schools' thinking in this area - indeed they were often over-shadowed by the schools' difficulties of managing the much greater numbers of boys, at whom most of the resources are targeted.
- The nature of the support on offer to girls, which assumes that provision is equally available for both sexes and the girls' responses, when in difficulty, can also lead to them not receiving help. Many are unwilling to take up current forms of support and some providers do not refer girls because they believe provision is inappropriate for them.
- Identification of girls' needs and the subsequent provision of services are compartmentalised. This applies particularly to girls who are pregnant or who have other health or childcare needs. Poor co-ordination of services can leave girls at risk of no one assuming responsibility for their support.
- 'Self-exclusion' and internal exclusion - for example, truancy or being removed from class, appear to be widespread.
- Many girls interviewed felt that schools use exclusion inconsistently, with clear differences between what teachers classed as acceptable behaviour from the two sexes. Differences were also reported in the way boys and girls are disciplined.
- Bullying is a serious problem and appears to be a significant factor in girls' decisions to self-exclude. However, bullying amongst girls is not easily recognised and there is often an institutional failure to tackle bullying among girls effectively.

It appears therefore that to improve the achievement of pupils, as Gray (1990) argues, schools must improve attendances and, as Galloway (1985) and Martinez (1995) suggest to achieve this, effectiveness strategies must be developed within the respective schools and colleges. As the school becomes more effective, the attendances, achievements and, ultimately, retention of students will improve in tandem. Research into raising achievement in and improving the effectiveness of, schools is progressing across a wide front and to date has produced data on the various factors that impact on attendance. In the Raising Boys' Achievement Project (DfEE 2003) exciting and innovative ways of raising achievement were examined. Working with over 60 schools in England across a range of primary, secondary and special schools, the research team identified and evaluated strategies that were found to be particularly helpful in motivating boys. Among the key findings were that higher levels of achievement could be reached by combinations of the following strategies:

- Using a direct focus on teaching and learning.
- Target-setting and mentoring strategies which are framed within a tutorial system that addresses academic issues, where 'protected' time exists, for meeting with the mentor and where they are given high priority by all staff.
- Creating single-sex classes, which learn with less distraction and disruption and encourage confidence among the learners.
- Using socio-cultural approaches, which underpin other strategies through challenging dominant images of masculinity and street culture by creating an alternative culture within school. In addition, strategies which aim to engage boys, to get them fully on board and to raise self-esteem for learning should be used.

These motivational strategies can only be successful if they are tailored to the local context, with full managerial support, with all staff involved and committed and the learning environment having clear boundaries and high expectations. Support procedures have also been found to be important in addition to target setting and teaching and learning strategies. In various studies of mixed secondary

schools over the past three decades, authors such as Reynolds *et al.*, (1996) have attempted to identify factors which can be strategically used to support school improvement and effectiveness. Analysing such research in both secondary and primary schools from across the world, Scheerens (1992) summarises these factors, and cites three characteristics of school effectiveness that have 'multiple empirical research confirmation' - i.e. they 'travel well' and can be applied to any school scenario:

- Structured teaching - good teaching and learning strategies.
- Effective learning time - creating teaching strategies to motivate and optimise learning time for the student.
- Opportunity to learn.

Creemers (1994) discovered that action taken at the classroom learning level has perhaps two or three times the influence on pupil achievement than activity at the school level. The importance of the theme of quality of the learning and teaching in the classroom (Scheerens, 1992; Mortimore, 1993; Creemers, 1994) cannot be overstated. These authors found that effectiveness is generated by three similar and overlapping elements: optimisation of learning time, academic focus and a high level of pupils' progress, which derives from the opportunity to learn. Creemers (1994) proposed a model of effectiveness which incorporated these elements. This model was found to be particularly useful for conceptualising, exploring and understanding retention issues in this study and is discussed later in this chapter.

An emphasis on shared goals is another factor in improving effectiveness (Reynolds *et al.*, 1996; Townsend, 1997). This gives rise to a positive work climate between staff, management and students, which also improves effectiveness. The attitude of the teaching staff is fundamental to maintaining this climate (Edmonds, 1979; Cheng and Tsui, 1999). In an analysis of teacher – related correlates, Crone and Teddlie, (1995) state that support given to new teachers was a major positive influence in making a school more

effective. Further support in the form of professional development of teachers, which improves staff motivation, the stability of the teaching staff and their teamwork are cited to be influential in the improvement of schools (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; García Gómez, 1999; Munro, 1999). In summary, good teaching and learning strategies employed by teachers coupled with motivation of both staff and students are viewed as important themes in the area of effectiveness.

Financial considerations - see also Financial Perspectives in the FE section on page 24, are now appearing as reasons for non-achievement and withdrawal. In a report by McCoy and Smyth (2005) into the work patterns of 16-18 year old secondary school pupils in the Irish Republic, it was found that the percentage of students working while attending school had more than doubled in recent years with over 60%, the majority of them male, now having a regular part-time job. Almost one in three of these students worked part-time and used a significant amount of their money on alcohol, with almost one in five purchasing cigarettes and half spending their money on clothes and shoes. Students working part-time achieved lower grades in examinations than those who did not and were less likely to progress to further study, regardless of the number of hours worked. There was also an increased chance of early school leaving, hence lower retention, especially among young people working more than 15 hours a week. Those from wealthier backgrounds had lower levels of involvement in part-time work, meaning their examination performance was less likely to suffer. Ms Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education and Science in Ireland stated that this was "very, very worrying" and that the decision to work was a lifestyle choice rather than one of financial necessity (Hanafin 2005). Finance will therefore need to be considered an important theme when analysing students' predisposition to withdraw.

Retention in the FE/FHE Sector

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) framework drove most FHE research on retention in the early 1990s. As the FEFC funding system was 'retention orientated', college managers concentrated on minimising student 'drop-out'. One of the first major reports on this issue by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), the Department of Education and Science, DES (1991) concluded that withdrawal is most likely to occur within 6 months of enrolment and identified a number of strategies that colleges could employ to improve their retention rates. Another major report, 'Unfinished Business' by the Audit Commission/Ofsted in 1993, which concentrated on 16-19 year old full time students, highlighted the varying completion rates both within and between colleges as well as between different national qualifications. By the mid 1990s, the retention issue became more prominent and the research on this covering the period 1990 - 1995 was mostly conducted by the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA). This was influential in convincing college managers that the solution to the problem of retention had both internal and external components and could be minimised by strategies developed within colleges. This has resonance with Galloway's (1985) finding that solutions must come from within the schools - in the case of FHE, within the colleges/institutes.

Student Perspectives

The research effort during this period, again primarily concerned with 16-19 year olds was led by FEDA, mainly by Martinez, 1995 et. seq., with other individual contributions from the Isle of Wight College, by Medway and Pennay, (1994), Lambeth College (1994), Stockport College (1995), South East Essex College, by Barret (1996), Knowsley College by CSET, (1994) and Martinez (1996), York College of Further and Higher Education by Kenwright (1996) and Bedford College of Higher Education by Bale (1990) among others.

Most of the FEDA work tested and analysed student opinion on retention and found that the reasons for withdrawal were multi-causal. Interpreting the results of the Isle of Wight study, Martinez (1995) found that the most important factors which distinguish completing from non – completing students were

- Induction advice
- Quality of teaching and helpfulness of teachers
- Tutorial support
- Gaining qualifications
- Qualifications of teachers.

It can be noted that these are all factors, which are internal to the FHE college.

The majority of this FEDA research found that what happens during a student's learning experience can be crucial in any subsequent decision whether to complete or withdraw from a course and that the most important areas within the colleges, which should be studied, are induction, quality and support. Supporting this FEDA research, Martinez (1995) suggests that withdrawn students had statistically fewer positive views when compared with current students of the college in several areas, notably support, quality provision and advice at induction. Within these dimensions, the withdrawn students also state that the 'less than caring' attitude of, and relatively poor quality of, support received from the college were influential in their decision to leave. He further suggests that withdrawal seemed more likely when financial hardship coincided with dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching and tutorial support. Reporting from a 20-college study in 1996, Martinez (1997) argues that factors internal to colleges such as student experience of tutorial support and the quality of teaching have a significant effect on a student's decision to withdraw and that action by staff can make an improvement of up to 10% in increased retention in a relatively short span of time – one or two years. Developing this theme of student experience, Hayes (1996) and Vick (1997) suggest that a sense of belonging and the forming of relationships respectively are important student needs especially during the crucial, early period of a course. A new dimension to the

retention debate was introduced in Martinez's 1995 paper - the concept of the 'at risk' student. He reports that work done at Preston College, found that early leavers tended to

- Have lower levels of incoming educational attainment,
- Live within certain postcodes and
- Be concentrated in certain vocational areas, namely health / social care, catering and construction.

Around half of early leavers had at least two of these features and a quarter had all three (Clegg, 1993 1994). It seems here that a key point could be being overlooked - students could enrol for a vocational course to acquire skills that they can use in the event of being successful in achieving employment. Upon beginning work and leaving education, they may be classified by the colleges as withdrawn due to financial considerations, which may be misleading. Adamson and McAleavy (2000) conducted a widespread postal survey of withdrawn students from vocational courses across Northern Ireland and using data from the 165 replies, a response rate of 29.89%, found that the majority of their vocational sample of withdrawn students were in employment and that attendance at their courses may have actually "enhanced their employability" and that the idea that the "educational resource (being) wasted must be questioned" (Adamson and McAleavy (2000 p. 15). It seems that when analysing withdrawal, the nature of the group being reported upon must be also a consideration in the analysis.

The recognition of external factors such as prior attainment has also been cited as a key input variable by Fielding *et. al.* (1998), Gray *et. al.* (1990) and Payne (1995). Echoing this theme of poor prior attainment, Beach (2003) stated that research at his college; Dumfries and Galloway indicated that there was a link between poor retention and low levels of literacy and numeracy among students. After finding evidence that those students with the highest support needs tended to be those most likely to drop out, a programme was launched to raise levels of literacy and numeracy across the college. As a direct result, student withdrawals fell from 10% in 1998 to 4% in

2001-2. The issue of interacting internal and external factors affecting student retention was also taken up by Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a, 2000b) and Palmer (2004 p. 94) who argued, "a student's disposition to learning can be shaped by both experiences occurring in the habitus and in the classroom". Concurring with this, Adamson and McAleavy (2000 p. 11) stated that these internal and external factors "may interact to produce a cumulative effect". However there is a difference of opinion between some authors as to the relative importance and interaction of internal and external factors.

Laglee (1997) suggests a method of identifying 'at risk' students based on observed behaviour of students. Briefly, the strategy is to train the guidance tutors to identify such students then provide motivational interviews that would encourage reflection and a change of perspective resulting in a more positive attitude towards learning. In their sophisticated multi-causal canvass of student opinion in the Isle of Wight, Medway and Pennay (1994) found a similar set of retention factors - induction, quality and support, to the above work of Martinez (1995). In the light of the above findings, this study addressed these three important areas, emphasising the dimension of support, which has external and internal inputs as well as outputs, in an attempt to find an improved strategy for retention.

Student Motivation

The literature review also suggests that motivation, or lack of it may be one of the main factors in influencing students to complete or withdraw. Developing this theme, Martinez (1997, 2000) reports that when colleges make efforts to maintain and develop motivation among students, the retention rate improves. He further suggests that students can be motivated to complete a course by the delivery of a curriculum that is relevant and is taught by a combination of varied, stimulating and challenging techniques (Martinez 1998). Furthermore, in another paper Martinez (1998a) developed the theme of motivation proposing that the tutor should be a learning manager, - see also Adult Students on page 18 below and be given training in counselling and guidance skills, motivational interviewing

and individual student action planning. In addition to the guidance and support ideas, Kenwright (1996) also introduced a strategy to motivate learners which involved using agreed targets with the students within a tracking process. Using targets to motivate students and optimise retention was a key finding of the LSDA retention report of which I was co-author (McMahon et. al. 2004). Interestingly and more subtly, it has been suggested by researchers on college effectiveness that initial motivations such as enrolling, expectations or aspirations have little bearing on whether the student remains on the course or drops out (Martinez, 1995, 1997, Lamping and Ball 1996, Davies et. al. 1998, Kenwright 1997). They argue that the most prominent factors are the level of support and quality of the student's experience, which become more important as the college year progresses. Student motivation was stated to be a key factor in improving retention in Martinez's (1996) study of Knowsley College. He further reports that the college had since developed staff training programmes in motivational interviewing techniques, developed by Miller and Rollnick, (1991) to reduce external influences on dropout. In addition, Dearing (1996) found in his Governmental report that retention rates were often worryingly low and, crucially, identified a lack of motivation by some students as a major factor in non-completion. The general consensus among educational researchers and writers is that there are two types of motivation - *intrinsic*, where factors inspiring motivation come from within the person e.g. self-belief, confidence and self awareness (Crowder and Pupynin, 1993: Kember, 1990) and *extrinsic*, where inspiring factors come from outside the person e.g. praise, support, encouragement and rewards.

In a study of non-completion on GNVQ courses involving a sample of over 3000 students, the Department of Education and Employment DfEE, (1997) unearthed a similar theme - that the level of student dissatisfaction with their experience of GNVQ's and hence low motivation was a variable linked strongly with rates of non-completion. It may be that if the student was motivated sufficiently, she/he may well be more satisfied with the chosen course although it should be restated that there are other factors such as good quality

teaching, which would enhance student satisfaction and motivation. The size of the sample, (3000 students) adds credibility to the results of this research. In a similar study of non completion of vocational courses, Adamson and McAleavy (2000, p. 7) went further than the then norm of seeking factors and variables associated with withdrawal and attempted to measure the motivational disposition of the student sample prior to starting their courses. They found that the students' disposition was overwhelmingly positive but cautioned "this initial positive motivational disposition is not sufficient in preventing individuals from dropping out in future". Clearly initial motivation is important but other relevant variables have influence.

In addition to motivation, some other factors were highlighted in a comprehensive paper on FE retention, where Barwuah, Green and Lawson (1997) argued that the most significant factors affecting retention were:

- Student commitment and motivation
- Inability to cope with course demands
- Low levels of ability
- Poor language and key skills
- Poor attendance and behavioural problems

By surveying those students who did drop out, Barwuah et. al. (1997) found that this group were less satisfied with the course, the quality of teaching and tutorials and the helpfulness of their teachers in providing support.

Adult Students

There is relatively little research on retention of adult learners in FHE with the exception of two studies of non-completion of mature and Access students initiated in 1995 and 1996 by Hughes and McGivney respectively. The adult experience in, for example night classes has features not shared by the majority of 16-19 year old students. Nevertheless, it has been found by these two authors that the same themes of quality of guidance, induction and support procedures were also important in regard to retention with these

adults. With evening classes, as Hughes (1995) reports, entry procedures were regarded as 'inadequate'. To overcome this, he recommends that special evening induction classes should predate these courses and buddy / mentoring schemes be introduced involving 1st and 2nd year students. Expectations should also be addressed - learners should be convinced of the benefits of all the support facilities available and encouraged to partake in them. Tutors should therefore not only be persuasive in this regard, as the adult students' main source of support they should be fully conversant with all college procedures that a student may have to use or experience during the college year: - Hughes (1995) identified that the level of ongoing and personal support positively affected retention. He further argues that tutors with a significant amount of contact should develop a role of manager or co-ordinator of learning. Kember (1995) argues that a counselling qualification should be sought through staff development for all tutors who have contact with adult students.

Feeder Schools

Local 'feeder schools' are also thought to be influential in FE retention (Page 1996). In a study of 14 such organisations, she found that pupils who joined FE from those schools with a culture of academic excellence were 4 times more likely to withdraw from their local FE college than those from less academically orientated schools. Some of the schools involved in this study had sixth forms with perceived academic excellence and would have been in direct competition with FE for the post 16 pupils. The reason given for the 4 to 1 ratio mentioned above was that some members of staff from such schools had five years to negatively influence their students' attitudes about FE and so, contributed later to early subsequent withdrawals.

In an interesting, qualitative and comprehensive four-year study of a cohort of students from year 11 in secondary feeder schools through to and in their programmes of study in their local FE colleges, Bloomer and Hodkinson (1997, 1999) showed that students' learning careers developed over time. These developments, coupled with other

external factors dramatically influenced/transformed students' dispositions. These transformations can even occur before enrolment on an FE course. Their profound finding was that **more than 50%** of these students changed their minds about their intended courses between the final school term and first term in FE. In such circumstances it is difficult to see how even the most efficient college systems of induction, guidance, quality or teaching strategies could have influenced some of these students not to leave. It would still be possible to prevent withdrawal in some cases by employing an early warning system to check whether students were on the right course and if they were not, to advise and with minimum trauma to their studies, place them in a more appropriate programme of study. Some colleges have employed such a process and introduced a special 'at risk' grid together with associated risk factors designed to monitor students for early signs of withdrawal. Two examples of this are Bridgwater and LNIFHE, using the models of Martinez (2000) and the model adapted by McMahon et. al. (2004), which is explained in more detail in chapter 5.

The Role of the Tutor - Pastoral Care

Advice and guidance/support have been identified as one of the most important features of the retention problem - in FHE by authors such as Hughes 1995, Martinez 1996, 1997 and in HE by Gutteridge and Compton, 1998). In an albeit single case study of students at Dumfries and Galloway FHE College, Beach (2003) found that there was a direct link between those students with the highest support needs and subsequent early withdrawals. As noted on page 14 above, Martinez (1995) also found that the most important factors that distinguish completing from non – completing students are induction, advice, helpfulness of teachers and tutorial support. Analysing the withdrawn students, he also suggested that the 'less than caring' attitude of the college and relatively poor quality of support received were major factors in their decision to leave early. Barwuah et al (1997), in an analysis of the opinions of withdrawn students also found that the two main factors were dissatisfaction

with both the quality of tutorials and helpfulness of teachers in providing support. Corroborating the importance of the pastoral/support dimension mentioned above, Davies (1999) argues that a reduction in support available to students impacts adversely on access and retention.

A strategy of training tutors in counselling and guidance skills to improve pastoral care generally was suggested by Martinez (1998a) and Kember (1995). Kember (1995) in his study of adult students, mentioned on page 18 above called for staff development in managing or counselling. The guidance and tracking systems should also become more sophisticated and include more comprehensive data on 'drop-outs' as well as those who complete their course (McMahon et. al. 2004). It seems evident that a study of retention needs to include an exploration of management and practice of pastoral support, as well as stakeholders' views on improvements in it

The Role of the Tutor - Target Setting

"The best argument for implementing target setting processes is that they work" Martinez (2001a p 2).

The pastoral role of the tutor is gradually being transformed into one involving increased emphasis on monitoring, reviewing and supporting student progress in a structured college-wide process (McMahon et. al. 2004). The college system of tracking and monitoring is increasingly being employed to highlight potential problems - e.g. to identify an 'at risk' student and deploy via the tutor, immediate and systematic action. Target setting is recognised as an important tool in aiding retention and, coupled with action planning, helps the student to develop, progress and achieve while completing their programmes of study. The Department for Education and Skills (DFES, 2006) defines target setting as an approach to raising educational standards by establishing specific measurable goals for improved pupil performance with *effective* target setting going one step further, and using assessment and other performance data to:

- predict potential,
- focus effort on raising attainment and
- support school improvement initiatives.

Targets should be expressed (Martinez 2001a) in one or more of four dimensions

- Grade achievement in assessments
- Attainment of outcomes expressed in terms of competencies
- Timing and sequencing of attainment
- Underpinning processes.

Targets should also be SMART which is defined by DFES (1998) as:

- *Specific* -Targets need to be negotiated and agreed with the tutor but owned by the learner. This ownership has cognitive, emotional and motivating elements.
- *Measurable* - Allowing learners and teachers to monitor and review progress.
- *Achievable* - If the targets are not achievable, demoralisation and disengagement will follow.
- *Realistic* -Targets should be realistic so that learners will be challenged and able to achieve to the best of their abilities.
- *Timed* - Targets should be set to allow sufficient time to develop the impetus from students to achieve and teachers to evolve strategies to deliver.

Managing and setting targets requires the tutor to systematically approach this as an on-going process, as well as to have a high level of knowledge, diagnostic skill, professional expertise and understanding of the learning task, subject and student. Targets that enhance student learning should be given higher priority, rather than using value added calculations to compare institutional performance. Therefore, target setting is about process, which aids quality assurance, rather than measurement that aids quality control.

In summary, target setting is a means of encouraging, recognising and measuring individual student progress relative to their different starting points and also a process whereby students can be helped to set their own personal and academic targets, to evaluate their progress in meeting those targets, helping their motivation and amend the targets in the light of their progress (McMahon et. al. 2004).

Methods of Target Setting

Several case studies on target setting (e.g. Martinez 2001a, Hodgson 2002, and Cox 2002) demonstrate a consistent rationale with approaches varying from college to college. Some initial target setting initiatives were later refined in the light of experience and/or trial and error. There are 3 main approaches to target setting.

Quantitative Approaches - These methods focus around collecting data about students' previous achievements (e.g. GCSEs) and assigning numerical value(s) to these. Numerical targets are then set, perhaps on the basis of tables or formulae that generate grade enhancement data for average students. Systems may have varying degrees of complexity, with some setting formative and others, objective targets. These approaches seem to lend themselves best to circumstances where existing and target qualifications are graded. They require careful development of the system employed, with tutor training and student induction being critical to success.

Qualitative Approaches - A variety of different qualitative approaches have been piloted in England with all having the following features in common:

- A focus on student performance processes that underpins learning i.e. attendance, submission of work to deadlines, punctuality and time management.
- Linked systems for tutoring and target setting.
- Ongoing monitoring and support for student progress via tutoring.

Combined Approaches - Such approaches include both quantitative and qualitative approaches. An example of a fully integrated approach is in place at Knowsley Community College (Gill and Carpenter-Jones 2000). Students are placed into one of 3 bands, depending on evidence derived from prior academic achievement, an initial diagnostic assignment and the first piece of assessed work. The particular band is then used to inform target setting, provide a transparent framework for tutor-student interaction and monitoring progress.

Financial Perspectives

In the late 1990s, the funding and finance available to further education students came in for criticism. The report by the Widening Participation Committee of the FEFC (Kennedy 1997) concluded that the arrangements relating to funding for students at the time were neither fair nor transparent. She went further (Kennedy 1997, p.15), stating "For those who are disadvantaged economically and socially, equity and viability dictate that all should have the opportunity to succeed. To continue with current policy at a time of rapid change will widen the gulf between those who succeed in learning and those who do not, and puts at risk both social unity and economic prosperity." Davies (1999) also points out that students of all ages were forced to reduce their involvement in college to a minimum, as part-time work became an importance source of funding. Generalising this theme, Dearing (1996) cited factors such as finance and employment as part of the overall personal circumstances that adversely affect student retention. This has resonance with the study of McCoy and Smyth (2005) into financial problems facing students at schools in the Irish Republic. Commenting further on such problems, Callendar (1999) has identified the existence of considerable financial hardship amongst students with those suffering the most coming from poorer backgrounds. She further found in her nationally representative sample of 1000 students that nearly one quarter of students consider dropping out because of financial difficulty. More insidiously, one third stated that financial difficulties negatively affected their coursework and examinations resulting in a significant number of

them refusing the opportunity to remain in FHE beyond their present course. Clearly this latter class of students would, under the present systems for tracking and monitoring retention, not be considered as 'drop-outs'.

This problem of measuring and defining withdrawals has been researched in more detail by McGivney (1996) and Frank and Houghton (1997). It seems obvious that in addition to the quality and pastoral dimensions mentioned earlier in this review, there is a managerial responsibility of researching, monitoring and if appropriate, providing financial support to students who require it. Therefore, in addition to the opinions sought from the interested groups, an inquiry/study into retention must focus on student support, financial or otherwise and associated managerial issues.

In 1999 the Government introduced a pilot scheme, the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to encourage more young people, particularly from deprived backgrounds, into post-16 education, helping with their retention and achievement. In an evaluation of the impact of the pilot scheme in West Yorkshire, between 1999 and 2001, Ashworth et. al. (2002p. 138) stated that the EMA had increased participation and retention in post-16 education and that "The impact of EMA on participation was greater for young men and had made greater improvements in their qualifications". In another longitudinal study of 14884 students spread across 21 pilot areas in England between 1999-2001, Battistin et. al., (2005) found that the EMA had significantly improved their motivation, attendance and attainment with participation increasing by 5.9% and stated that projected nationally, this figure will be approximately 3.8%. Corroborating most of the opinion above, in an equivalent evaluation of these years in Scotland, Croxford et. al. (2002) stated that attainment had not yet been demonstrated to have improved and that there was some concern these students should not be treated differently when by being given financial incentives. Overall, however the introduction of the EMA in East Ayrshire had been a positive contribution to student retention. A general conclusion, which could

be drawn from these studies from differing parts of the UK, is that a financial inducement for some students will positively influence retention.

Staff Perspectives

Whilst the students' opinions are extremely important, the views of teaching staff and management also deserve both equal and thorough scrutiny. It is the *differences* between the various perspectives on student retention that are important, as Martinez (1995) reports; there is a gap between staff and student perceptions of the reasons for early student withdrawal. He found that when staff focus groups' opinions were analysed, their perceptions of the reasons for student withdrawal were largely external to the college e.g. student personal problems or low incoming grades etc. In contrast, the students see the reasons as being largely internal to the college e.g. poor support and guidance mechanisms. Indeed Palmer (2004) argues that the external influences outweigh the internal ones by a ratio of 4 to 1. The fact that there is a discrepancy in the opinion of these groups, the staff and students who practice the process of teaching and learning respectively speaks volumes; it is therefore important that this study elicit their opinions and due cognisance be taken of the findings.

Another such difference in perspectives in this case between staff and management emerged in a study of the use and process of internal data by Elliot and Crossley (1994). They suggested that there was an incompatibility between lecturers' perceptions of quality and managements' pursuit of quantitative performance indicators. It therefore seems important that for a case study on retention, the opinion of both groups is sought and an evaluation of these indicators and associated success criteria be conducted. One of the first authors to highlight the importance of staff opinion was Spours (1997) who undertook a study of five FE colleges. He argued that approaches to student retention were often hindered by pre-occupation with imposed funding methodologies. Although he found that whilst there were differing views among lecturing staff,

nevertheless, their opinion was that there should be a staff consensus on this issue within an education-led rather than funding-led approach. According to Spours (1997), there also were two other recurring tensions one between staff and management, the other between staff and students. It seems evident that research to explore the existence and/or extent of these tensions was needed and as such, it was important for this research study that all relevant opinion from the three groups, tutors, managers as well as students be obtained and analysed. Such tensions did become evident in the interview phase of this study and are reported in chapter 5.

In a publication produced for NATFHE, the college lecturers' union, Savory (2002) analysed over 1000 completed questionnaires of the 2000 sent to lecturers in FE colleges and found that from the perspective of staff, drop out rates were related to student ability to cope. This ability to cope is, he suggests, related to over assessment, excessive content, poor incoming GCSE attainment profiles, the level and rigour of the AVCE and the burden of the key skills qualification. It should be pointed out that this survey was conducted in the context of 'a continued climate of financial and organisational instability, poor industrial relations and lecturer morale' (Savory, 2002, p.27). In partial agreement with this paper, Barwuah et al (1997) found that lecturing staff considered that inappropriate student aspirations and poor course choice were key reasons for dropout. The Savory (2002) study also called for better working conditions, improved professional development, organisational stability and for the lecturers to be better valued.

Staff Morale / Motivation

The themes of staff morale and of being better valued was picked up by Owen and Davies (2003) who conducted a survey involving 13000 questionnaires to measure staff satisfaction in 100 colleges. They found that management should be concerned about any general tendency towards negativity in staff opinion. Arguing that satisfied learners are associated with satisfied staff and with consequent better student retention and achievement, they state that

“organisations are unlikely to have satisfied customers in the absence of positive, well-motivated staff” (Owen and Davies (2003 p. 45). Work by Savory (2002) initiated at the behest of NATFHE has also highlighted staff morale as being an important factor affecting retention. It seems likely that low morale among staff could mean less motivation when teaching, higher absenteeism and a consequent negative effect on student motivation which would then affect student retention. Indeed staff retention affecting student retention may in some cases be a significant issue – this point does not yet seem to have been investigated fully by the research community. In his five-college case study of staff opinion on retention, Spours (1997) noted comments from staff included increased administrative and assessment loads as well as a feeling of alienation from job and student. Again, it can be deduced from this study that morale and motivation of staff are serious issues that need examination. Another negative comment, which may also impact on staff motivation, was that teaching time was reduced to accommodate tutoring and guidance, two features which students, in contrast cite as important in keeping them *on* courses. The managerialist approach of college management, which has been driven by increased Government accountancy demands has become an important issue and was cited by Randle and Brady (1997) as a reason for staff feeling ‘deprofessionalised’ and ‘deskilled’. This staff ‘feeling’ of adverse managerial control over them is also supported by research conducted by Somekh *et. al* (1999).

In his survey of the opinion of staff, Spours (1997) found that in addition to students having poor incoming grades - poor prior attainment - many lacked commitment, were allowed to enrol late having ‘sampled’ other courses and the colleges were recruiting under financial pressure. Indeed “retention problems were seen by staff as the downside of marketing success” (Spours 1997 p.114). To summarise, he found unsurprisingly that staff were laying the blame for the retention problem on students and management with little liability on the lecturers themselves.

Noting that Incorporation in 1993 introduced a strong contextual factor in shaping staff attitudes towards perceptions of retention and strategies for improving it, Spours (1997 p.112) argues that the views of staff are important, as they are “key actors in improving the capability of colleges in this area”. As Aspinwall et.al. (1994) argued, in addition to the quantitative performance indicators such as examination results, there should be a wide level of consensus among those whose performance is to be judged - the teachers - so that the basis of the judgement is acceptable. In suggesting a holistic, college - wide approach, Spours (1997 p.111) stressed the centrality and importance of teachers and administrators for bringing proposed changes into operation, remarking, “Ownership by all staff of improvement strategies is important”. Echoing some of the points above in his publication on raising achievement in FE, Martinez (2000 p. 73) states that “motivating staff is an integral part of strategies designed to raise achievement” and cites five main ways in which this is done:

- Team development.
- Information and awareness raising.
- Continuing professional development through action research and mentoring.
- Efforts to reduce bureaucracy.
- A shared approach to the management of change.

It is clear that motivation and morale have clearly emerged as important issues in the opinion of staff, who are pivotal in motivating students to achieve as well as to remain interested and enrolled on their courses.

College Information Systems

The early FEDA research reported that college – based management information systems (MIS) failed to record accurate reasons for withdrawal on all courses with consequently misleading conclusions about the main reasons for student drop out (FE Staff College, 1994, Cardy, 1994 Martinez, 1995). This is still a problem today - sometimes when a student leaves, it may not be possible to

accurately record a reason for withdrawal and an educated guess is necessary. It is important (McMahon et. al. 2004) that students be contacted as soon as possible after they have withdrawn in order to attempt to persuade them to return and establish accurately the reason for their discontent. In some cases, the student may be motivated to return simply because interest was shown by the institute in him/her. Alternately, if the root cause was for example, poor advice given during induction and the student is contacted early enough, it may be possible to persuade that him/her to return to a more suitable course.

It is the case that some students who have found a job consider that they have progressed and may resent the 'drop-out' label (Medway and Pennay, 1994). Page (1998) challenges the 'managerialist' approach to retention i.e. that all students who enrol intend to complete, and suggests that a new category of student, the 'opportunist' should be recognised. This type of student is one who, having nothing better to do, possibly because the local job market does not contain attractive job opportunities, enrolls on a course and leaves when an employment opportunity subsequently arises. At present the approach employed by most college managements for recording reasons for non-completion is to wait for a period of four weeks of non-attendance then 'withdraw' a student. A tutor will note or sometimes guess the reason for this and note it on a withdrawal form. The present MIS tracking systems have therefore tended to supply 'one answer' as a reason given by students for dropping out or not achieving. There are four main weaknesses with this system:

- There may be more than one reason for a withdrawal; (Cardy 1994) discovered that many of these non - completers did so each for a variety of interrelated reasons and Martinez (1995 p.14) reporting results from the Staff College (1994) states that reasons for withdrawal "usually relate to two or more factors".
- Putting the onus on the tutor may for various reasons, not necessarily produce accurate answers.

- Concentrating exclusively on early leavers disregards a rich source of data from the completers, who usually share the same experiences and problems.
- These systems generally do not identify the 'at risk' students.

A suggested improvement (McMahon et.al, 2004) would be to use the new NICIS management information system for tutors as a source of information containing data on retention related factors. This information could also contain data on features that are important in highlighting 'at risk' students. The system would then highlight such students according to criteria set out by course teams of individual personal tutors. Independent students' learner agreement (ISLA) forms could be centrally coordinated, updated and the information communicated to appropriate staff. Student profiles with information such as punctuality and absences could also be created and accessed. If the need arose, the system could facilitate the sending of letters to students who are in danger of dropping out. In the event of withdrawal, the NICIS system would automatically generate a reminder to initiate a follow up contact with the student. It is suggested by the literature review (McMahon et.al. 2004) that there is a need to improve follow up procedures.

Management information systems are extremely useful during the critical process of admissions and enrolment, increasing efficiency by using one-time capture of data enabling processes such as printing enrolment forms and learning agreements from initial application data (McMahon et.al. 2004). To achieve this, a more relaxed cross-college approach to sharing inputting beyond the management information team and a whole college culture must be created to formalise a logical approach to the collection and retention of enrolment and other data. To summarise, NICIS could support the teaching team, reduce the paper trail and allow the tutor to place more emphasis on tracking the relevant students.

Quality - Quality in Education

In the literature review so far, the term 'quality' has been mentioned often. Since effective quality provision to learners has been shown to be positively influential in student retention [e.g. Martinez (1995, 2002), Medway and Pennay (1994), Davies (1999) and in higher education, Ravis (1996)], it was therefore important to examine it and the associated term 'Total Quality Management' on page 37 as major themes of this research study. As each student expects to receive a 'quality' experience and the educational organisation aims to provide this, it is important that this term is defined more clearly. Generally, quality has many definitions that can be distinguished in absolute and relative terms. As an absolute, it can be described as 'goodness' or 'truth' and hence not easily measured. However, as a relative term, quality can be thought of as being concerned with the following features (Owen 2002):

- Conforming to requirements.
- Fitness for purpose.
- Meeting customer (i.e. student) needs.
- Exceeding student needs.

It can be seen that these factors have a common link, the student. Meeting the students' needs is a clear quality requirement that any educational organisation must guarantee. The purpose and requirements of the educational organisation must therefore be based on delivering quality products such as advice, learning and placement on proper programmes of learning. This process begins with marketing and recruitment. "Effective recruitment of students and their placement on the right programmes to optimise achievement is the core business of Further Education" (Clarke, 2001p2). Retention strategies are almost always going to be dependent on the correct placement of students into the most suitable and appropriate course. This point is developed further in the following discussion of the ideas of a number of major theorists on quality in organisations below. From this perspective, for any retention strategy employed by a college/institute to be optimally

successful it must therefore be student centred. It seems clear that failure to deliver on these features of quality will have a negative impact on retention. Specifically, each 'lost' student results in a loss both in revenue to the college and educational achievement of the student. The consequent cost to the country will be the loss of a contribution to the national skill-base. Increasing retention rates in our institute directly and positively affects our educational/financial performance. Finally the Government's alleged intention to shift the balance of power towards consumers sharpens focus on our efforts to ensure and consequently manage quality provision.

The following section of this literature review explores quality in a general sense, outlines the models and philosophies of four well-known quality theorists: Crosby, Deming, Ishikawa and Juran and describes the EQFM model. For the last 50 years, their work has been generally used as a basis for quality theory and practice.

Crosby's (1979) view was that quality means conformance to requirements and is better achieved by prevention than inspection. He based his philosophy within a quality improvement process, which consisted of 14-steps, (Table 2.1 in Appendix 2.1) and stated that management systems tolerated the concept of 'acceptable quality levels', which encouraged errors among the workforce. He proposed (1979) that there should not be any of these errors and defined such an error free system as having 'zero defects' in its quality provision.

Deming also developed a 14 point plan (Table 2.1 in Appendix 2.1) stating that motivation is a key driving element for both staff and management'. Quality will be maximized by ensuring that all staff work together in an atmosphere of harmony both with management and each other. This can only be done properly by a strategy of employing organization - wide commitment to staff development through continuous improvement and training. Deming created the Plan-Do-Check-Act model for continuous quality improvement (figure 2.1). This approach is also known as the Shewhart Cycle.

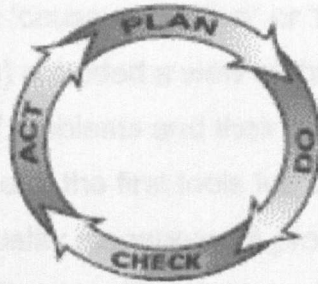


Figure 2.1 Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act Model (from Tague 2004, p. 390)

Ishikawa (1985) believed that quality improvement is an ongoing continuous process that can always be taken one step further, stating that company-wide quality control should include continued customer service. Targets and methods for reaching them must first be determined then implemented and checked by management and an educated workforce. Standards were important and must be constantly evaluated and changed. Consumer views, needs and satisfaction, however were the ultimate source of managerial decision - making. For this reason it is of the utmost importance that student opinion on retention issues be assessed. Ishikawa (1985) made use of a 7-point plan, which he called his critical success factors and suggested using 7 tools, (Table 2.1 in Appendix 2.1) designed so that staff from any part of the organization can utilize the factors without specialized and expensive training.

Defining quality as 'fitness for purpose', Juran believed that the customer's requirements were the drivers that should influence an organisation's quality provision. Juran viewed the occurrence of poor quality as being a problem that could be blamed on staff only in a minority of cases. He introduced the idea of a 'quality trilogy', depicted in figure 2.2 below and suggested that there were 10 steps in the quality improvement cycle to be used in conjunction with the quality route map (Table 2.1 in Appendix 2.1).

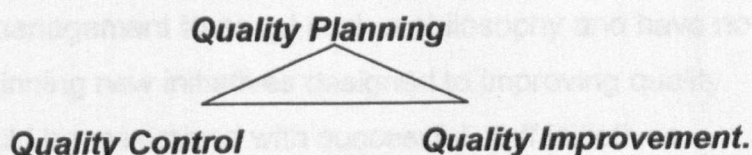


Figure 2.2 Juran's 'Quality Trilogy' (Fredendall 2001 p. 56)

A much used idea, the 'cause and effect' or 'fishbone' diagram (figures 2.3 (a) and (b)) provided a view of the situation which allowed root causes of problems and their subsequent effect to be identified. This was one of the first tools for 'Total Quality Management' in the quality management process, used extensively by both Ishikawa and Deming. The 'fishbone' diagram also demonstrated that quality improvement for customers (students) could be made from the "bottom up". This concurs precisely with the point made by Martinez 1997, Fitzcharles 2001 who argued that student needs, and hence retention would be best served with a 'bottom up' coupled with a 'top down' approach. To maximize quality provision, Ishikawa stressed the importance of involvement of all staff being committed to and involved in the quality process with the support and encouragement of management.

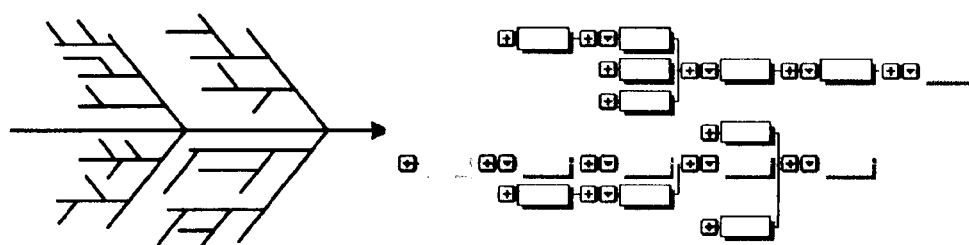


Figure 2.3 (a) 'Fishbone' Diagram. Figure 2.3 (b) the Right Angled 'Fishbone' Diagram (Ishikawa, 1985)

Essentially, the major 'quality theorists' argue that there should exist a pre-planned, functioning quality assurance and control process/mechanism which is constantly being improved and has the support of a motivated workforce who are to be trained in quality provision. They suggest that the organization's workforce should therefore be aware of quality issues and committed to continuous quality improvement through an internal 'quality council'. Management should be committed to supporting staff and breaking down barriers between different strata within the workforce. Staff should be motivated by management to adopt such a philosophy and have no fear about beginning new initiatives designed to improving quality. Strengths should be maximized with successful staff initiatives recognised and weaknesses improved. Where possible, action projects, such as this research study should be attempted to solve

problems. There should be constant evaluation of targets and goals and corrective action(s) should be carried out, all in an atmosphere of identifying, empathizing with and addressing customers - in our case student and staff needs. It is therefore important in this research study to examine quality, its provision and management, the views of staff / customers (students) and the staff as internal customers of each other as to how it is provided by / to them.

Another model of note is the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model (see appendix 2.2) founded by EQFM, a membership based, not for profit organisation, created in 1988 by fourteen leading European businesses, to be what they described as 'the driving force for sustainable excellence'. It is designed to help organisations establish a management system by continuously and contemporaneously measuring where they are at on the path to excellence. Features of the model include:

- People development and involvement. The full potential of an organisation's people is best released through shared values and a culture of trust and empowerment, which encourages the involvement of everyone.
- Continuous learning, innovation and improvement. Organisational performance is maximised when it is based on the management sharing of knowledge within a culture of continuous learning, innovation and improvement.
- Corporate social responsibility - excellence is achieved when the organisation strives to understand and respond to the expectations of their stakeholders.

This model will be discussed further and compared with the Creemers (1994) model of school effectiveness later in this chapter.

Total Quality Management

Total quality management is a system whereby quality control and assurance mechanisms are understood and applied by all staff with the object of addressing the institute's mission statement (appendix 2.3) and strategic plans. This involves the activities such as marketing and recruitment, curriculum development, strategic planning, resourcing as well as evaluating the students' learning experience. Quality management ideas generally are useful for internal purposes, specifically in this study of retention for a number of reasons as can be seen from table 2.2 below.

- The total quality management approach produces a fresh perspective for looking at organisational activities and their interrelationships.
- They emphasize the primacy of learner needs and the importance of ensuring their organizational values, structures and processes are directed towards these needs; they thus provide a much needed 'bottom up' perspective in contrast to the more usual 'top down' management view.
- They propose an integrative and holistic approach to management, linking aspects that are often treated separately: overall organizational values and strategy with staff development and learners needs.
- They provide a systematic rather than piecemeal and incremental procedure for monitoring and evaluation, including asking for learners views.
- They require a proactive stance, attempting to design learning experiences to prevent problems occurring, rather than reacting to those that have already occurred.
- They focus on ongoing development as a continuing process, involving all staff within the organization.

Table 2.2 Total Quality Management Rationale

(The Open University, E838 Study Guide, 1997 p. 108).

Any study of the management of retention should include a fresh look at and suggest improvements to, organisational activities, the interrelationships, as depicted in figure 2.4 - the three interested groups and the primacy of learners' needs, analogous to student and staff needs, as stressed by quality theorists such as Ishikawa (1985). The

holistic nature of the approach to the management of quality, shown in table 2.2 provides a rationale for involving management, staff and students in a survey of opinion, one of the principal aims of this study.

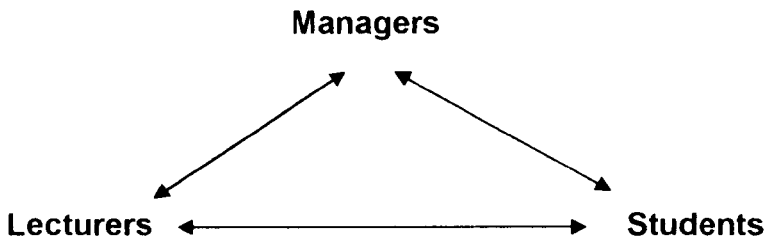


Figure 2.4...The Three Stakeholder Groups, a Triangle of Harmony.

Quality Control is a system, which educational organisations use to gain information from staff, students and possibly others – for example parents of students, through feedback in order to correct mistakes and improve performance. Quality control involves regular monitoring and reviews of course programmes with a distinct focus on outcomes. Internal quality control mechanisms would include for example, appraisals, departmental reviews and assessment of students. External mechanisms would include inspections and examination results. Also used for internal and external accountability purposes, it is a reactive mechanism, looking back to learn from mistakes.

Quality assurance is concerned with ensuring compliance with process and maintaining quality provision. This system is proactive; using processes that are designed to prevent potential problems and ensure that course delivery matches students' needs. This process analyses the overall aims, content, resourcing and forecast outcomes of programmes of study. The importance to improving student retention of employing this type of system was highlighted by Davies and Martinez, (2001), who stressed the need for colleges to develop and manage a retention strategy. This would be supported by a robust quality assurance programme with a focus on the student and effective two way communication in a system of continuing review and evaluation. Within this programme, two processes can be identified: - Self Evaluation and Benchmarking.

Self Evaluation

This is a process of reflection undertaken by teams within an educational organisation. It involves reflection on practice, the identification of which improvements are required in their practice and professional development, quality of provision and the raising of standards generally. This evaluation process can then be used to construct an action plan, which will

- Compare current against previous performance of the course
- Evaluate this performance against other broadly similar courses
- Identify under-performance and implement improvement strategies.

These processes of comparison, identification and implementation, if performed properly, will result in the continuous improvement of the course performance indicators. Often, more effective improvements can be achieved when a course team collaborates with and copies relevant elements of best practice gleaned of other, better performing teams within the institute. *‘Many colleges are starting to see sharing internal practice as an integral part of an organization-wide quality improvement strategy.’* (Cox and Smith 2004 p. 1). Comparison can be done through a process known as benchmarking -see below.

In Northern Ireland, colleges use a self-evaluation process known as the IQ: RS (2003) -Improving Quality: Raising Standards published by the LSDA for the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – see also Quality Improvement Programme (2003).

Within this process, various measures of performance, quality and success are used. Its strength and success lies in the fact that these same indicators are in place and being measured on an annual basis. This self-evaluation approach, which does not use the process of mass inspection, is one area of adherence to some of the work of the ‘quality theorists’ mentioned above. For example in Deming’s 14 points of quality improvement, specifically point 3 in Table 2.1 in Appendix 2.1 - ‘Cease dependence on mass inspection: Eliminate the need for mass inspection as the way of life to achieve quality into the product in the first place’ (Deming 1986 Ch 2). Those institutions

which have taken cognisance of this have achieved an 'excellence culture' (Briefing No. 4 LSDA 2004 page 4). In addition, by using effective two-way communication their staff became committed to a continuous improvement process. Deming also refers to the need for organisations to break down barriers (point 12). By engaging all staff from across the organisation, the college will be successful in improving quality. For this reason quality initiatives must come from the top of the organisation (Deming point 7). The LSDA recognised this and in the quality improvement programme (2003), placed strong emphasis on the quality of leadership and management.

Benchmarking

Traditionally, there are three types of benchmarking:

Metric benchmarking - This is the simplest and operates through comparison of performance data using key performance Indicators and treats educational experiences as assembly-line processes.

Diagnostic benchmarking - Here, an assessment is made using surveys of student experiences, behaviours, and attitudes of the organisation's performance status to identify areas that need improvement. Unlike metric benchmarking, diagnostic systems see the student-college relationship as an interactive process, which directly affects students.

Process benchmarking - This is an expensive and time-consuming type of benchmarking, involving in-depth, comparative examination of a specific core practice at two or more educational institutions.

Benchmarking, is succinctly defined by Owen (2002 page 14) as 'A method of identifying what must be improved in an organisation, finding ways of making those improvements and then implementing the improvement'. This method can improve various aspects of FHE such as:

- The quality of learning support provision.
- The quality of teaching and learning.
- The quality of the learners' experience.
- The learners' satisfaction and hence motivation, which have a direct bearing on retention and achievement.

Benchmarking is therefore a very important process when retention is being considered and analysed. When constructing a benchmarking process, one must ensure that the needs of the learner are being addressed. Such information can be gleaned from the performance indicators of the course from, for example, student surveys, ISLA forms, retention figures or achievement and progression rates - see also 'success indicators' below.

Success Indicators and Performance indicators

Success indicators are indicators of the attainment of goals, which then act as the basis for generating effectiveness criteria. Success indicators must be firmly established and agreed early in the lifetime of a course. They are summative, measure successful completion of previously agreed goals or targets and are an end product. General criteria include measurement of total output - numbers of successes, quality - good delivery, productivity - individual's successes, efficiency - sizes of classes versus hours taught and economies realised - profit. To measure the quality and standards of the management of enrolment for example, indicators would include for example 'What our Clients say', 'Was the Institute welcoming?', 'Were staff polite and friendly?', 'Were staff informative?' and 'How long did it take to enrol?'

On the negative side, Aspinwall et. al. (1994) and OFSTED (1995) state that teachers consider the production of appropriate success criteria to be very difficult. It is especially difficult to establish these measures where there is a multiplicity of courses and associated types of student. Added to this scenario will be the importance of the attitude of staff, whose opinion will need to be sought.

Performance Indicators (PIs) on the other hand, are measures of how a college, course or even a student is performing during the programme. It is also important to determine how the organisation shall know whether the achievement has been made or is in the process of being made. They are those indicators which a college or institute has in place to check whether the organisation is carrying out the planned activities as intended. In the words of Hopkins and

Leask (1989 p.6-7), “a performance indicator is a statement against which achievement in an area can be assessed; they are also useful for setting goals and targets... there is a place for both qualitative and quantitative indicators”. It is possible to perform well against PIs and not achieve ultimate success. For example, a student could complete the course, achieving this performance indicator and for health reasons, fail the final examination thereby not achieving the success indicator for the college. Performance indicators vary from national to individual colleges’ internal indicators. For example in Scotland, the colleges adhere to the PIs, which are issued by the Scottish FE and HE Funding Council (SFHEFC), are generated from college data and are what we could call:

National Performance Indicators - These are measures such as:

- Retention at a point 25% through the course.
- Completion of the course.
- Achievement by number of units passed.
- Achievement by % of students gaining their final award.

Course Performance Indicators - These would include, as mentioned above staff or student satisfaction surveys, retention figures and achievement rates.

Student Performance Indicators - These would be, for example student reports, attendance rates, agreed ISLA targets achieved during the course etc.

Performance indicators can be categorised into three areas:

- Quantifiable measurements – complaints, achievements rates, retention rates, etc.
- Financial measurements – staff costs, material costs, SPURS income, which was introduced in 1998 to replace the FTE, full time equivalent measure etc.
- Time-based measurement – time used in response to a problem, time taken during induction, etc.

Organisational Issues

In more recent research on effectiveness in FHE, Martinez (2001c) argues that current FHE research is limited in nature, has a shelf life, because of changing Government policies in education, changing trends in for example jobs, markets and shortages of skills and as such, cannot be used systematically to compare college with college. Furthermore, those components within colleges which are the most important variables controlling retention and drop out rates are not identified in current research on effectiveness. He further states that many of the improvement strategies being employed to tackle the retention problem in colleges are broadly similar to those identified in schools with three of the college strategies standing out as being different:

- *Threshold* - advice, guidance, recruitment and induction. FHE students experience difficulty before and after enrolment.
- *Tutoring* - the role of the personal tutor in FHE seems to be more fully articulated, involving having oversight of the whole of a student's progress, close liaison with teachers as well as both the pastoral and academic responsibilities.
- *Curriculum* - there is a greater degree of discretion and choice in FHE.

It is to be noted that the themes of support and quality are present here. Barwuah et al (1997) recommended that colleges have clear and integrated recruitment procedures, induction programmes and guidance systems with prompt action being paid to non-attendance and the early identification of students who are at 'risk' of dropping out. Indeed when colleges made these same systems more effective, retention rates improved (Hall 2001). By analysing literature reviews in institutional web sites and personal communications, Hall (2001) concluded that:

- Retention rates differ by: sector of education, age of the student, level of course, subject of course, socio-economic group and institution.
- Data on retention is often of poor quality and may be inaccurate or

misleading.

- Reasons for student drop out operate at individual student, institution and supra-institutional levels.
- Institutional capability should also be developed with Martinez (1996) suggesting an action research dimension either to accurately utilise college data or involve external consultants. He reports that Knowsley College realising that £1million was at stake, successfully initiated 60 projects on retention involving all members of staff.

Strategies for improving retention:

In a shift of emphasis described earlier, later work by Martinez (1996) used his previous findings on retention to systematically focus on both the learner and institution by identifying 6 types of strategy for improving retention. Additionally, Davies (1999), while researching FHE student retention strategies also identified three types of successful strategy initially developed by Martinez (1997), involving curriculum, support and managerial dimensions. Generally, with only small differences of emphasis, most researchers in this area agree that successful retention strategies must contain most or all of the 6 elements outlined by Martinez (1996, 1997) below.

- *Induction* - Sorting students appropriately - ensure a good match between student and courses by improving pre-entry information. Identifying 'at risk' students.
- *Advice and guidance* - Supporting students in all aspects, for example financial, learning, study and curriculum enrichment programmes.
- *Connecting* - Connect them to college by encouraging personal responsibility for learning with, for example, mentoring schemes and enhanced tutorial packages.
- *Motivating and transforming* - Raise expectations, and self-belief through career and progression activities.
- *Motivating staff and transforming the colleges* - Develop and implement teaching and curriculum design strategies.
- *Managerial* - Develop whole college strategies, monitoring, procedures, student tracking and MIS systems as suggested by

authors such as Martinez and Munday (1998), Davies (1999). Regarding improvement strategies in FHE, there are no 'magic bullets', 'single solutions', 'one best way' or 'golden rules' (Martinez (2000, 2001b) and Kenwright (1997)). Clearly, attendance/retention is a problem of a multi-dimensional nature; any analysis must involve a study of management of pastoral care / support, quality, change, strategy, people and students as well as learning. Apart from the Retention and Benchmarking project initiated by LSDA 2003/2004, this author has not found any published evidence of research into retention having been systematically carried out by Institutes in Northern Ireland. Such research would take into account the unique political, cultural and social context of Northern Ireland and establish which strategies are being employed to maximise retention.

This EdD research study examined the strategies employed by LNIFHE in its college development plan (CDP) (research question 4.9). As has been demonstrated by other authors' work, mainly in England and mentioned in this literature review, each college has a unique culture thereby necessitating individual research programmes to identify the precise blend of retention strategy required. In these programmes, unique local factors such as urban/rural situation, cultures of feeder schools, mix of awarding bodies and the organisation, which sets the policy agenda, will be involved. Each of these individual strategies must "engage teaching teams" (Martinez 2003) and must address the issues of how tutors, lecturers and senior staff/management conceive their roles. This theme relates to Aims 1 and 4 and Research Questions 1.1 and 4.9; an analysis of the particular performance indicators and strategies used by LNIFHE to measure and improve retention and which should help to produce an improved retention strategy.

The Three Stakeholder Groups

As has been discovered by many researchers, notably Martinez (2001b, 1995, 1997, 2000), Spours (1997), Elliot and Crossley (1994)

and Savory (2002), there are three important stakeholders within an educational institution - the students, teachers and managers. Much research into stakeholders' opinion on the factors affecting retention with some analyses of their contrasting perceptions of these factors has been conducted. However, this review has not found evidence of a systematic examination into either the effectiveness of, or stakeholders' opinions on the use of performance indicators to measure retention. It is therefore important that analysis of stakeholder opinion is included in this research study – this will cover research questions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. The relationships and harmony between the three interested groups is the kernel of the entire retention problem. Diagrammatically this can be viewed as minimising the lengths of the lines or the area of the triangle of figure 2.4: - The closer each group are to each other implies less disagreement and more harmony. It seems therefore to be of crucial importance that the perspectives of all three groups are analysed so that convergence and harmony can be established and the conditions for effective change created. Such an analysis would address Aims 1 and 2 and Research Questions 1.2, 1.3, 2.5, and 3.8. Good, effective communication between management, lecturers and students is the key skilled behaviour required to promote motivation and harmonise this triangle.

In the particular case of an institute of FHE, the issue of retention can be at least partially addressed by action taken by and from within the organisation. The key word is motivation - if managers, lecturers and students are all motivated and working in harmony the retention problem will have a better chance of improvement. Martinez (1997, 2000) agrees and suggests that retention varies directly with the effort which colleges make to improve student motivation. Concurring with this, Dearing (1996) argued a similar point from an opposite perspective stating that a lack of motivation among students is a major factor in non – completion. On the subject of staff morale/motivation, authors such as Randle and Bradley (1997) and Somekh et. al. (1999) cite a managerialist attitude as being responsible for low morale among teaching staff – this may also have

a direct affect on student retention. Although researchers have investigated motivation, notably Martinez (2000) mentioned above, to date this author has not discovered any systematic research, which could *measure* motivation among students during their tenure at a further education institution.

Retention in the Higher Education (HE) Sector

In higher education, researchers generally have found a similar set of factors influencing retention as those in the further education sector. For example, Ravis (1996) cites Government policy, new modes of educational provision and entry to HE as reasons for increased attention to quality and effectiveness of the students' learning experience. This has resulted in increased demands for student support, advice and guidance on entry to and during study at HE. At present, those students with health problems, or other accepted forms of disadvantage within their entry profile, have received high levels of attention from the HE educational system/university. However, students with needs stemming from other physical, social or cultural difference tend to be expensive to manage appropriately as they are atypical of the majority. As a result of their atypical situation and because their circumstances may expose prejudice and deficiencies in the structures supporting the system, they may inadvertently generate resistance from the educational organisation (Heron 1997, Morgan 1997). This is despite the fact that pressure is being applied from Government to widen access to HE for such students. It is certainly a difficult claim to measure, quantify or prove. If true, however, in terms of retention, these students would therefore be vulnerable.

In his paper, Gutteridge (2001) argues that the problem of retention will be eased if specific strategies to enhance student participation and progress are enacted. He found that a majority of incoming students have additional individual needs that need to be addressed continually throughout the duration of their studies - this class of students could be thought of as being 'at risk'. Gutteridge further argues that any retention strategy must incorporate planned

continuing development and pay attention to the impact of individual previous learning experience/attainment, the students' social context that includes social disadvantage, the effect of structural barriers and lack of life skills development. Such support strategies must be usefully invoked at the interval of peak demand, which he suggests lies within the six weeks of the beginning of a course. Echoing the importance for retention of the early part of a course in FHE, Kerka (1995) identified several recurring themes, which included the fact that the first few weeks of a study are crucially important and that one cause of early withdrawal was a gap between the learner's expectations and reality.

From 1994 –2000, Gutteridge (2001) conducted a wide-ranging qualitative study of student support in a traditional, medium sized city-centre university campus, Coventry and the Open University. After analysis of the study, which also made use of the work of Harrison (2000), Gutteridge defined 'life skills' to consist of these three dimensions:

- Self- management.
- Self –appraisal.
- Effective communication.

Although advice, guidance and strategies to widen participation are integral to retention, it may be the case that retention is partially predetermined by the students' previous life course learning before entry to the HE institution (Gutteridge and Crompton 1998). They also argue that student motivation, approach to study, and academic progress will depend on personal context.

In his study of part time, withdrawn students from the areas of business and management, social sciences and healthcare from some of the new universities, Yorke (1999) obtained 328 responses from part time (PT) students - he does not state the response rate. This coupled with his study of full time (FT) and sandwich students who withdrew from 6 institutions - 2 new, 2 old universities and 2 FE colleges in the North West of England giving a response rate of 32% (2151 students) provided a succinct comparison. Given the relatively

small and probably biased sample, this comparison should be viewed as suggestive rather than indicative. He reported the most influential 12 influences on withdrawal from HE institutions, which can be seen in table 2.3 below.

A glance at this table shows that of the part time withdrawn students, 75% cited either employment demands or other financial problems as being the prime reason for leaving. Among the full time students, a total of 52% cited these reasons with the largest single factor (37%) being financial problems. In contrast, the issues of quality and suitability of teaching were mentioned by 54% (FT) and 38% (PT) with support cited marginally more often by FT students (48%) than PT (38%).

Percentage indicating moderate or considerable influence.

	Part-Time (Response 328)	Full-Time and Sandwich (Response 2151)
Demands of employment whilst studying	52	15
Needs of dependants	26	15
Workload too heavy	25	17
Financial problems	23	37
Programme organisation	22	27
Inadequate staff support outside timetable	21	24
Timetabling did not suit	21	11
Teaching did not suit me	19	31
Quality of teaching	19	23
Lack of personal support from staff	17	24
Personal health problems	17	23
Stress related to the programme	16	22

Table 2.3 Influences on Withdrawal from HE Institutions

(Data: Yorke 1999 p.59).

In a study of student withdrawal for the Open University (OU), Simpson (2003) analysed a cohort of new OU students who he felt were at risk of not completing their courses and concluded that the university should continue to develop good contact and follow up procedures. He went on to suggest that as the result of just one telephone call, the retention rate improved by 5%. In a subsequent small-scale survey, Simpson (2006) advocated that the university

should look at events in a student's life leading up to withdrawal. Analogous to retrieving the black box recorder after an aeroplane crash, this procedure may reveal reasons present in the student's life, which will result in a future withdrawal from a course. Although the work was printed in the form of an article in the Open House Staff Newspaper and not formally published as a paper, the data strongly suggested two main points:

- 1 - That those students who did not withdraw had good support networks – family, work-friends, employers and other students – compared with those who left early.
- 2 - That it was important for the institute/college to take the initiative and contact the student who they felt were in some way 'at risk' rather than wait until the students contacted the college.

This latter point concurred with Simpson's (2003) findings. As a result of this study, the OU has set up a website for family and friends of students to help support them and the 'ProActive Student Support' (PASS) project in which the university contacts students regularly at the early stages of their courses to help with potential problems.

Retention Outside the UK

International comparisons highlight some interesting points. UK drop out rates were compared with those of Italy, Benn (1995 a, 1995b). At that time (1995) the UK had relatively lower drop out rates than those of Italy, which employs an open admissions system. She found that higher drop-out rates in Italy were attributable mainly to:

- Type of secondary school attended - linked to social class.
- Type of study undertaken - part-time or full-time.
- Lack of educational guidance.

In the UK she found that factors that were most likely to determine a student's success/retention on a course of study included:

- Course failing to live up to expectation.
- Inadequate pre-course information.
- Under qualification.

Research in the USA tends to address the problem and identification of 'at risk' students. In the UK, this phrase tends to mean a poor incoming academic attainment, showing signs of developing difficulty or having problems affecting attendance and developing an unsatisfactory attendance pattern. However in the USA, 'at risk' tends to refer to a student with a profile involving factors such as delinquency, poor financial situation, ethnicity, social class and family background. Determining those students deemed to be 'at risk' is the precursor to employing interventionist strategies both at school and college in the USA, whereas in the UK, we tend to wait until difficulty with a student arises before intervening (Noel 1985, Wehlage et. al., 1989). The intervention strategies in both countries are similar in nature (Roueche, 1994). There are however, three significant differences as reported by Martinez (1995):

- Ethnicity is one of the most important features/factors in identifying and classifying an 'at risk' student in the USA.
- There are substantial funds from local, State, Federal and various private organisations (Noel 1985).
- Some of this funding is tied to an action research programme with evaluation indicators to suit the funders (Smink and Stank 1992).

In a review of US research on retention Brawer (1996) found the most prevalent characteristics that impacted positively on retention were age, the intervention strategies used, such as orientation programmes and mentoring. Studies by Alexander Astin (1977, 1993) found that the retention rate of students is affected primarily by the level and quality of their interactions with both peers and staff. Tinto in 1985 suggested that those students who have integrated into the academic and social life of an institution are less likely to drop out. In further research in 1987 he stated that the factors in students dropping or "stopping" out include academic difficulty, adjustment problems, lack of clear academic and career goals, lack of commitment, poor integration with the college community, incongruence, and isolation. Furthermore, he stated that academic advising is at the very core of the problem and solution of retaining students in HE.

Clearly these advisors provide a student with personal interaction which research has found is vital for retention. They also must provide proper information on the various services of the university and supply the academic connection between these services – for example financial help or residential advice in halls of residence, and the students. The advising services must also include career services, allowing students to bridge between their academic planning and their career goals. Indeed, as Noel et. al. (1985 p. 17) stated:

“It is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students...and the caring attitude of college personnel is viewed as the most potent retention force on a campus”

Developing the theme of interaction, Rendon (1995) suggests that two critical factors in students' decisions to remain on course are their successfully making the transition to HE aided by initial and extended orientation and advisory programs and making positive connections with college personnel during their first term.

Approaches to Conceptualising and Analysing Retention

As can be deduced from the literature review, the approach to analysing retention has been largely a-theoretical, consisting of the production by researchers of lists of influencing factors under the external / internal / students, staff and organisational headings. In addition, little work has been performed in order to analyse how these various factors interrelate and cumulatively affect each-other. Therefore, it is necessary to look elsewhere for a conceptual framework for analysing and explaining both these findings and the data from the survey component of this case study, which can be viewed in chapter 5. Three possible frameworks, Bush's typology, the EQFM quality approach and the Creemers' model of school effectiveness are discussed.

The Bush Typology

One well known typology of management models (Bush 2003) can be summarised under the headings of table 2.4 below. This framework features six models of interest: the formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguity and cultural approaches.

Elements of Management	Type of model					
	Formal	Collegial	Political	Subjective	Ambiguity	Cultural
Level at which goals are determined	Institutional	Institutional	Subunit	Individual	Unclear	Institutional or subunit
Process by which goals are determined	Set by leaders	Agreement	Conflict	Problematic may be imposed by leaders	Unpredictable	Based on collective values
Relationship between goals and decisions	Decisions based on goals	Decisions based on agreed goals	Decisions based on goals of dominant coalitions	Individual behaviour based on personal objectives	Decisions unrelated to goals	Decisions based on goals of the organisation
Nature of decision process	Rational	Collegial	Political	Personal	Complex and fluid mix of problems, solutions and participants	Rational within a framework of values
Nature of structure	Objective reality hierarchical	Objective reality Lateral	Setting for subunit conflict	Constructed through human interaction	Problematic	Physical manifestation of culture
Links with environment	May be 'closed' or 'open' Head accountable	Accountability blurred by shared decision making	Unstable external bodies portrayed as interest groups	Source of individuals meanings	Source of uncertainty	Source of values and beliefs
Style of leadership	Head establishes goals and initiates policy	Head seeks to promote consensus	Head is both participant and mediator	Problematic may be perceived as a form of control	May be tactical or unobtrusive	Symbolic

Table 2.4 Six Models of Educational Management (Bush, 2003 p.23)

In formal models, the goals are set at senior staff level with support from tutors taken for granted. Decision making is a rational, 'top down' process within a hierarchical structure where the leader is perceived as the most powerful person in the organisation. These models will not be particularly useful in optimising retention, as they do not account for student opinion of goals, regarded as important by authors such as Ishikawa (1985) and Adamson et. al. (1998). This

point was put succinctly by Adamson et. al. (1998 p. 57) who stated "it would be prudent to initiate more rigorous evaluations of the students' aptitudes and aspirations on application to particular courses". As will be seen in the survey component of this study, reported in chapter 5, when managing retention, it is essential to take account of the opinions of, and value the students and staff in an organisation. It will also be argued in chapter 6 that a more student centred and humanist approach must be followed by management when attempting to maximise retention. In addition, for optimal provision of quality, as stated in the TQM strategies and depicted in table 2.2, there should be both a 'top down as well as a 'bottom up' approach.

Other weaknesses associated with formal models include the fact that they are based on the assumption that organisations are relatively stable. This assumption is unrealistic in FHE today – as March and Olsen (1976, p.21) stated "individuals find themselves in a more complex, less stable and less understood world than that described by standard theories of organisational choice". In addition, the rational nature of decision making ignores the view of authors such as Weick (1976 p. 1) who states that much of human behaviour is irrational and that "rational practice is the exception rather than the norm"

Collegial models are strongly normative, assume that goals are not imposed from above and can be agreed within a lateral management structure by members of staff participating in harmony. The principal therefore is assumed to be one participant in the decision making process. Whilst this situation may be perceived as an ideal one, from a democratic point of view, in reality the consensus on a complex set of student, staff and management aspirations and goals is very unlikely to be achieved. "The collegial idea of round table decision making does not accurately reflect the actual processes in most institutions" (Baldridge et al, 1978, p. 33).

Other limitations include the fact that such decision making processes are slow and cumbersome with some principals referring

to the process “going on and on” as stated by Webb and Vulliamy (1996 p. 446). In addition, principals are accountable to external groups and may be uncomfortable when defending policies which have emerged this type of process that did not enjoy their support. The effectiveness of collegiality depends on the active support of staff. If this support is missing, the process is almost certain to fail. It will be seen in chapter 5 that when surveyed, some staff at LNIFHE do not support or fully implement some of the quality assurance systems, a very important retention related theme.

In political models, the setting of goals is done by each subunit or department. Structurally, the interests of the more dominant groupings or departments will be addressed through committees which reflect the relative strengths of these units. The main weakness with this type of model is instability, which is generated when conflict arises as each subunit promotes its own agenda sometimes to the detriment of others. However it should be borne in mind that conflict is always present in FHE, as Morgan, 1997 p. 167 states “conflict will always be present in organisations . . . its source rests in some perceived or real divergence of interests”. The consequence of this emphasis on conflict contained within this model results in diminution of collaboration among staff, found by authors such as Spours (1997) as being important when considering retention. Such models also focus heavily on policy formulation with the implementation of the policy receiving little attention, which leads to implementation gaps and is therefore a limitation. These gaps, for example the quality assurance system referred to above, were exposed as occurring at LNIFHE during the analysis of the survey component of this thesis in chapter 5. Despite these criticisms, Bush (2003) argues that the political approach is a realistic portrayal of the decision making process employed in FHE today.

Subjective models, in contrast to the formal type, are strongly descriptive and place focus on the individual and their interpretations of situations rather than with the organisation. Whilst this is to be welcomed if a student-centred approach is taken, the inherent

weakness contained is that individual interpretations of events will differ, as Bolman & Deal (1991, p. 244) put it “the same events can have very different meanings for different people”. Organisations will be therefore viewed by individuals differently and leaders will be expected to acknowledge these views. This is a less secure scenario from the point of view of an individual leader in a particular organisation and is therefore unattractive as a management model generally and for retention in particular. In contrast it could be argued that they contain attractive features – for example the view that the organisation is not fixed or predetermined but is a product of human interaction. As Bolman & Deal (1991, p. 121) argue “Organisations exist to serve human needs rather than the reverse”

Ambiguity models have the following features- the organisation resembles an incoherent structure, is characterised by fragmentation, has a lack of clarity about its goals and has some internal processes which contain a degree of uncertainty. Their approach is best described as analytical rather than normative and they are particularly appropriate where there is external or internal turbulence, which is usually caused by change. Ambiguity is a prevalent feature of schools and institutes of further education today and is particularly acute during turbulent periods of change (Bush 2003).

These models have certain weaknesses – they offer little practical guidance to leaders – not an ideal situation for a manager generally especially when dealing with the complexities of student retention and do not allow for collegial style teamwork. This contrasts with the approaches of the formal and collegial models which stress the importance of the head’s leading role and teamwork respectively. They are also not appropriate during periods of stability or for stable organisations and tend to exaggerate the degree of uncertainty which exists. In reality, colleges have a number of predictable features coupled with rules, procedures and responsibilities. Features could include timetables, lesson plans, schemes of work as well as accountability to management and Government. In addition the particular college policy framework in place remains intact as does

the understanding by its teachers of the broad goals of the organisation. However the understanding and co-operation of the staff are not always present in FHE as will be seen in chapter 5.

Cultural models emphasise informality, focusing on the individual's values and beliefs, which are assumed to be at the heart of the organisations. These values and meanings are also assumed to be shared among members. The style of leadership connected to these models is assumed to be moral, where the leader is expected to share the values and beliefs of the constituent membership of individuals. This approach adds a humanist approach to management which is a good counter to the rigid components of formal models. It should be stated that these models can be fragmented or ambiguous. The main weakness connected to this type of model is where cultural leadership may result in the imposition of the beliefs of the leader onto the other members of the organisation. This has been succinctly described as a "process of ideological control" by Morgan (1997 p.150-151). Because of the many divergent needs and personal values associated with each student and member of staff, inevitably there will be several student and staff subcultures, often centred on departmental subgroups operating within one institute / college.

The six approaches to management in education presented above have several attractive features spread throughout them. However the ultimate test of theory is whether it improves practice and, as there is a multiplicity of competing models, there is no single theory which will be sufficient on its own to guide practice. As (Martinez (2000) when referring to the improvement of student retention put it, there is no 'one best way', adding "the way that strategies to raise achievement are inspired, researched, designed, implemented and evaluated varies considerably from college to college and even within the same college" (Martinez 2000 p. 90). No one approach is therefore necessarily the correct one for the successful management of retention and an amalgamation of the best features of several approaches is necessary. Leaders and managers will have to

develop the idea of “concept pluralism” (Bolman and Deal 1984 p.4) where they will have to select the most appropriate approach to the particular situation to which they are presented. The typology outlined by Bush above also suggests conceptual pluralism and emphasises that different models are applicable to the different stakeholder groups. The Bush typology is inappropriate with respect to retention where, as the literature review has found, the required approach is one which brings together the perspectives of the 3 stakeholder groups in a college.

The other two approaches will now be discussed. The EQFM quality model (figure 2.5 below) emphasises the idea that stakeholders / customers and their opinions are central to the activities of an organisation. These opinions have been found by earlier sections of the literature review to be an important feature when considering student retention. The other approach is the Creemers model, which advocates among other things a rigorous application of quality at the levels inhabited by the three stakeholders that were also found in the literature review to be important when considering retention.

The EQFM Model

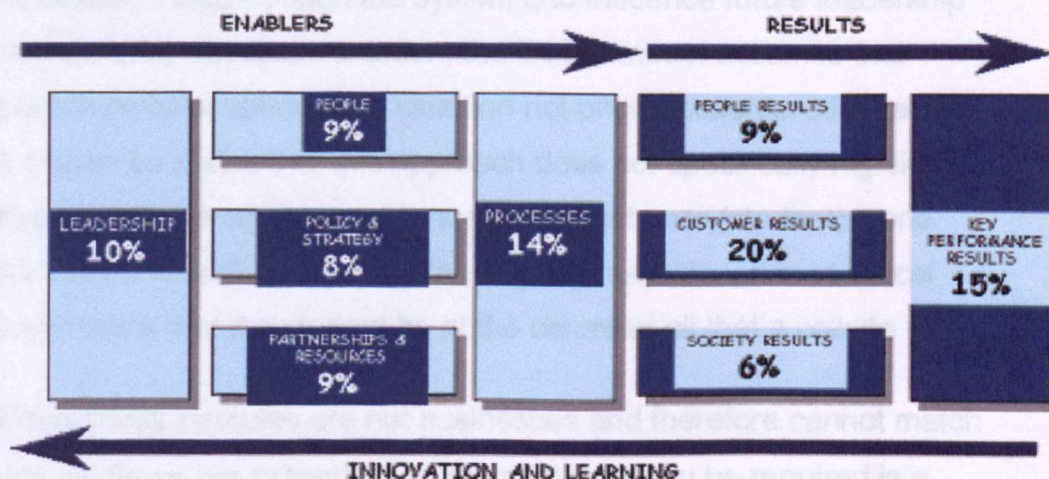


Figure 2.5 The EQFM Model of Excellence

Source <http://www.eiga.com/products/quality/model/index.asp> (25-08-06)

As depicted, this model consists of 9 areas, divided into 5 'enablers' and 4 'results'. The basic concept is that excellence is achieved through leadership which drives policy and strategy and is delivered

through people, partnership and resources. The results then inform leadership to refine and improve strategy through renewed policies. Although linear in appearance, the model strives to achieve excellence through the management of people by encouraging a shared approach to quality improvement. It is based on these assumptions:

- Leadership is predominant; understands and responds to expectations of stakeholders.
- All 9 areas are providing excellence simultaneously.
- All people are working and contributing interactively and in unison within a culture of trust and empowerment.
- All people are continuously learning and improving.

The EQFM model is a paradigm, an ideal to be strived for. However, if some of the stakeholders are not feeding into the process or are not following policies of the institute then flaws occur. As will be seen in the data analysis chapter, the survey revealed that not all tutors follow espoused policy regarding quality provision, an important retention related theme, leading to the appearance of such flaws. The EQFM approach is a cumulative process which will allow these mistakes to feed through the system and influence future leadership decisions. An idealistic creation, the EQFM model assumes that people perform optimally, a situation not often encountered in reality. It should be stated that this approach does not specifically highlight the central and critical importance of the customer (student) alone. As this thesis will show, when dealing with retention, it is of critical importance that the student be at the centre of all that a college does.

Educational institutes are not businesses and therefore cannot match this model as it is presently structured. What may be required is a look at a model based on a school rather than a business. Creemers (1994) looked at the three levels of pupil / classroom, school / management and context. This approach, although initially designed to improve the effectiveness of schools, has a resonance with the EQFM model through its consistent application of quality to the three stakeholder groups. In addition, it concurs with the opinion gleaned

from the survey component of this thesis and the work of authors such as Martinez (1995) who stressed the importance of the opinions of these stakeholder groups, depicted in the harmony triangle of figure 2.4.

Creemers' Model

Creemers (1991, 1994) developed a framework in which the three dimensions of opportunity, time and quality are repeatedly applied with consistency, control and constancy to the levels of pupil / classroom, school and context – see figure 2.6 below. This is an open systems model, which emphasises a whole college approach that runs through the organisational, department and classroom levels to the student and advocates that quality provision should permeate these different levels of the organisation. The whole college approach, advocated as a strategy to improve retention by Martinez 1997, Fitzcharles 2001 can also be adapted for use in an FHE environment. In addition, Creemers operates in an 'input / output' environment – put in quality laden systems as input, get successful results as output and become more effective. The result of these more effective systems is better retention (Hall 2001). It should be noted that better retention outputs may of course lead to better results. Authors such as Martinez and Munday (1998), Davies (1999) have similarly advocated these types of whole college strategies, which they have found helps to optimise student retention. These approaches also emphasise that managers identify, understand, empathise with and address the needs the staff and students, linking the same 3 stakeholders involved in the Creemers approach to the application of the dimensions of opportunity, time and quality.

This also links closely with the theme of the need for close integration of views of the stakeholders at various levels of the organisation. Taking aboard the views of these stakeholders has been found to be important in the whole area of management of retention by authors such as Spours (1997) and Savory (2002). The concept of a shared approach to quality permeating at all levels in an organisation, found

in the Creemers model will help to improve staff and student satisfaction and motivation, themes which also have a positive influence on retention as, found by Owen (2002) and Owen and Davies (2003).

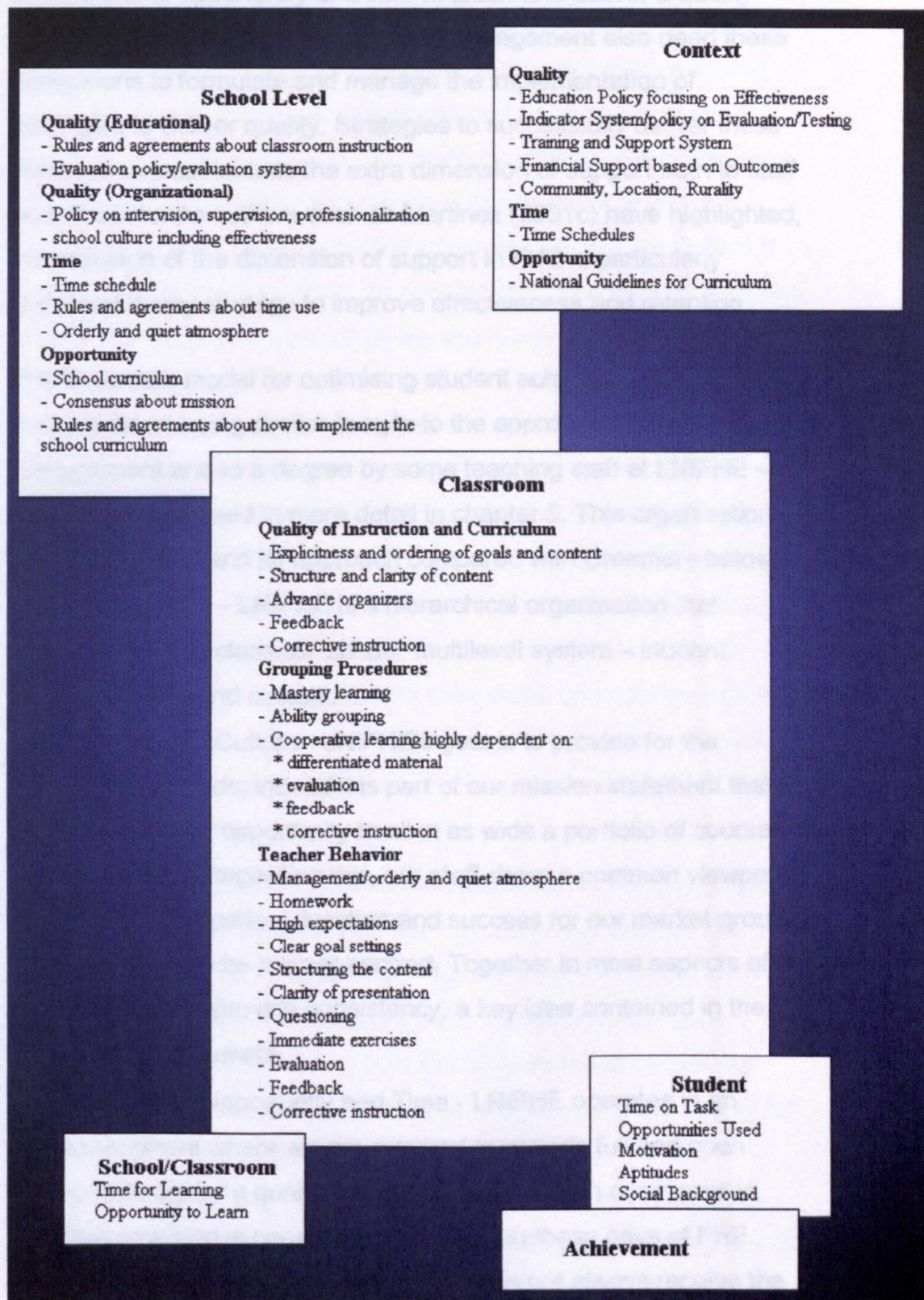


Figure 2.6 The Creemers (1994 p.119) Model of Educational Effectiveness

However, it seems obvious that to achieve success in a course, students will need sufficient opportunity and time to be taught as well as to learn and should receive an educational experience of the necessary quality for them to succeed. Similarly, teachers need the dimensions of opportunity and time to teach and deliver a quality-laden teaching and learning strategy. Management also need these dimensions to formulate and manage the implementation of strategies to deliver quality. Strategies to successfully deliver these dimensions must include the extra dimension of support both to staff and students. As authors such as Martinez (2001c) have highlighted, the inclusion of the dimension of support in FHE is particularly important in any strategy to improve effectiveness and retention.

The Creemers model for optimising student achievement could be considered as being similar in style to the approach aspired by senior management and to a degree by some teaching staff at LNIFHE – this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. This organisation is briefly described and its approach compared with Creemers below.

- **Structure** – LNIFHE is a hierarchical organisation that operates in a classical ‘school’ multilevel system – student, department and context.
- **Context / Culture** - LNIFHE’s goal is to provide for the students’ needs; indeed it is part of our mission statement that we must offer opportunity to all in as wide a portfolio of courses as possible. Regarding this, our staff share a common viewpoint - to provide quality education and success for our market group - they aspire to be learner-centred. Together in most aspects of our work, we provide consistency, a key idea contained in the model of Creemers.
- **Quality, Opportunity and Time** - LNIFHE operates in an environment where we are required to provide full and open opportunity for a quality education and broaden our provision. This provision is constrained by time ~ in these days of FHE having financial constraints; students do not always receive the teaching time that their tutors feel is necessary - this causes motivational problems among staff and students. In addition, it

should be pointed out that reduction in time will lead to a diminution of the consistency, constancy and control aspects of a whole college approach.

Finally, Creemers has been used as a model of school effectiveness for many years and, unlike TQM models was designed for the educational environment. It is relatively simple to understand and with a slight modification to include support, a feature known to be important for its positive effect on student retention, could also be applied to FHE. As has been mentioned both above and in the survey report of chapter 5, the Creemers approach is one which is already aspired to at LNIFHE. In addition, the Creemers requirement that quality must permeate all levels and involve the three stakeholders whose needs and views are considered critically important to a strategy for the successful management of retention makes this an attractive approach to examine. For the above reasons, it would appear that the approach of Creemers is particularly useful for conceptualising, exploring and understanding retention issues. This model will therefore be forwarded as a basis for exploring and analysing the problems of student retention at LNIFHE. The staff will be asked for their views on both the model and associated improvements which could be made. It must be stated that the approach of Creemers and models such as EQFM, have certain weaknesses:

- The assumption of 'Normative Cohesion' – An organisation cannot always assume that staff will act for the greater good of all involved in that organisation. When a rational model such as Creemers is applied there are often 'implementation gaps' between espoused policy and its implementation by staff as noted by Fullan (2001). This problem emerged in the survey for this thesis and is detailed in chapter 5.
- The possibility of degrees of difference in the 'Control Principle' and the assumption of 'Constancy' - human beings can not be assumed to apply a rule in a totally uniform manner.
- The acceptability of the idea of a 'quiet atmosphere' in which the educational organisation functions. In reality, this does not

often happen – the often turbulent external policy context sometimes induces internal turbulence and disharmony through applications of, for example rational plans.

- It does not take sufficient account of societal variables such as ideology, class, dysfunctional behaviours, pressures on stakeholders, morality or ethics.
- It does not take sufficient account of organisational variables such as politics or ambiguity.
- It does not take account of multiple agendas.

The key point is that changes to environmental domains can adversely affect cognitive outcomes and behavioural patterns. Therefore rational models like Creemers have limitations.

To explore the possibility of improving on this model, a further discussion of the potential for its use in FHE, informed by this literature review and the data analysis of this study can be found in chapter 6. A variant of this model, which includes the dimension of support, will be suggested in chapter 6.

Summary of main themes of the literature review

Retention in FE, schools, HE and abroad is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon, not an exclusively educational one and solving or at least minimising the problem makes ethical, moral and financial sense – at present it is a fact that there is a significant loss of revenue for every student who does not complete. The majority of published research is a-theoretical, mainly consisting of lists of internal and external influencing factors on retention, for example the work of Martinez (1995) and Beach (2003) respectively. In the FHE sector there is a multiplicity of these factors affecting student retention with each institution having a unique context and set of circumstances to consider when addressing this problem. More recent work by various authors, for example Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000a, 2000b), Palmer (2004) as well as Adamson and McAleavy (2000) have argued that not only do these factors influence student retention; they even may produce a cumulative effect. The

identification of factors which affect retention has therefore been designated as the first aim of this study.

It has been shown by Martinez (1996, 1997, 2001c), Davies (1999) and DES (1991) that where they were introduced, interventionist strategies have been fairly successful in the colleges concerned. For this reason it seems logical to examine, as aim 4 of this study the strategies employed by LNIFHE to improve retention. They all share common features, mainly improved advice, guidance and tracking measures coupled with better quality provision. Of these features, student satisfaction with support and guidance mechanisms both pre and post enrolment and the effectiveness of quality assurance and control measures employed by the institutes/colleges appeared to most strongly influence retention. In particular, support and guidance were cited as being critically important by authors such as Burwuah (1997), Hughes (1995), Martinez (1996), (1997) as well as Gutteridge and Compton (1998). How the support and quality measures were managed is a recurring theme also found in managements' employment of strategies designed to improve retention. Support and guidance processes will therefore be examined as aim 2. Quality assurance and control were deemed important in optimising retention by authors Martinez (1995, 2002), Medway and Pennay (1994), Davies (1999) and in higher education, Ravis (1996). It is therefore essential that this case study must include an examination of the management of quality and support mechanisms as aim 3.

Another prominent theme that emerged in and occurred throughout the literature review was the importance of the opinions and motivation of the three stakeholders, the students, teachers and management. Analogous to consumer opinion being important as stated in the quality literature by Ishikawa (1985) and Adamson et. al. (1998), student opinion should be sought and taken cognisance of. The importance of the inter-relationships of the stakeholders of the model in figure 2.4 was also highlighted. This author therefore took account of the stakeholders' opinion in the survey component of this thesis.

Finally, a review of the main features of three approaches to conceptualising and analysing retention was performed. The main idea emanating from the discussion of the Bush typology was that of 'concept pluralism', which was rejected because it did not integrate the perspectives of the three stakeholder groups. The Creemers school model of effectiveness was analysed and connections with the business orientated EQFM modelling approach noted. Given that the inclusion of the extra required dimension of support was necessary to manage retention and for the reasons outlined in the sections above, it appeared that Creemers offered the potential to be the most easily adaptable approach. To employ this approach to managing retention, a variant of the model will be suggested in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The chapter will be presented initially with a description of the design of the overall study and a discussion of the various issues involved - my role, bias, validity, reliability insider research and ethics, together with the rationale for the instruments used in such an investigation. A description of the techniques for data coding and analysis will form the conclusion of the chapter.

Overall Research Design

Structurally, the research study consisted of a pilot study, called the initial study, followed by the main study – the descriptions of which can be found in the relevant sections below. The overall project was organised with the help of a diary, which was essential to provide a framework within which the research was conducted. This diary was used as a log of all activities and discussions, a 'free flowing' account of some reflections on the log and a record of descriptions of particularly important events or situations. By conducting this research, hopefully, this author has successfully examined the situation, produced a report that will inform policymaking and made a positive contribution to the management and provision of education at LNIFHE. This research may also be of relevance to other colleges of further education.

General Design: - The Case Study Methodology

The selected research design was one of **case study** because it was a detailed study of a specific situation, retention at LNIFHE, the findings of which may be made reference to and used for future plans. It also uses a variety of data collection techniques, which include qualitative and quantitative data. A case study is particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over the events (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995) – as was the case in this instance where the author was attempting to investigate the management of retention at LNIFHE. They suggest (Hitchcock and Hughes p.317) that a case study has several hallmarks, all of which this researcher attempted to incorporate into the design for this study. These included

- A vivid and relevant descriptions of events,
- A chronological narrative of relevant events,
- A description and analysis of events.
- A focus on the players involved, and analysis of their perceptions of events.
- A focus on specific events and people who are central to the case.
- Integral involvement of the researcher.
- A portrayal of the depth and richness of the study.

Case studies are set in temporal, organisational, geographical and institutional contexts, which was also the case in this research study. Some of the strengths of the case study approach, which this researcher attempted to incorporate, included the fact that results are easily understood, intelligible to a wide spectrum of people, strong on reality and catch the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of participants' experiences and views of the situation being examined. Thick description of a human behaviour explains the behaviour coupled with its context, so that it becomes meaningful to an outsider. Other strengths include flexibility; they can be undertaken by a single researcher, as is the case here and can provide insights into other cases, for example other colleges. In addition to an extent, they allow for some tentative and loose generalisations to be made as well as contributing to a world of action, adding to research data which itself drives future studies which themselves may become a rich archive for future reinterpretation by other researchers.

An analysis of the literature review showed that the main organisational issues pertaining to retention in FHE were the provision and management of quality and support particularly in the areas of teaching, learning and guidance both during the induction process and throughout the course. Furthermore, the opinions of the learners, tutors and management on these issues have been found to be important. The learners' opinion is clearly crucial in whether learners make a decision to withdraw, while the staff and management perspectives are important as they will construct and implement strategies to optimise retention. In addition, an analysis of the learners' perspectives would help management in their understanding of

how college structures and processes could be changed to enhance retention. The case study therefore was designed to elicit opinion from a sample of each of the three main stakeholder groups, the students, tutors and senior management by the use of a combination of questionnaires and interviews, as well as a desk search to analyse policies and strategies. The sample in this study was not directly representative of all students, staff and senior management in LNIFHE or even in FHE generally; it was a particular group whose experiences and attitudes may be shared by others in FHE – in other words, to quote Michael Bassey's phrase, we might take some conclusions as the basis for 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey 1998). These involve the researcher making a best estimate of trustworthiness (BET), which is a professional judgement, based on this author's experience and knowledge. Making such a BET reaches beyond the empirical evidence of the case study into the realm of professional tacit and explicit knowledge. This demands that the researcher considers empirical findings in terms of who may use it - and how useful it may be in their particular context. In this case study, such generalisations might have heuristic value in improving retention at LNIFHE and add to research data on this topic, as mentioned above. It is this author's hope that this research will be seen as being professionally relevant and a positive contribution to the improvement of retention in FHE generally may be achieved by this case study. Some limitations are also present in this type of study. The generalisability of the results is limited - they may be selective, subjective or even biased. This author sought to minimise such bias throughout the entire process - see section on bias and validity below.

In qualitative research, generalisability from a single case study is perceived as a problem. Although this research concerned itself with the management of retention at LNIFHE and was not meant to be representative of other institutes, nevertheless as Silverman (2003) suggests, there are ways of obtaining generalisability from such qualitative research, one of which, purposive sampling was used here. Purposive sampling allows us to select a case; here it was a 'representative' class, described in more detail below, from each school that illustrates a feature or process in which we are interested

for example good or bad attendance. The technique demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population and choose our sample on that basis. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994 p.202) put it “qualitative researchers employ purposive sampling methods, seeking out groups and settings where the processes being studied are most likely to occur”.

The advantages with this type of research design included: - limited control effects and stronger chance of colleagues' participation in particular, as the event only occurred infrequently with a one – off interview (Cohen et.al. 2001). In addition, it was inexpensive and reasonably quick to administer. A major limitation was the fact that only one class was taken to 'represent' each school that was itself a weakness in the sample design. Changes in opinion over time were not included. As the time for completion of the project is limited to two years, a larger and more representative survey was not possible.

Initial Study Design

The purpose of performing the initial study was to develop/refine the methodology, test out research instruments and contribute to the exploration of the research questions and hypotheses of the overall doctorate. The questionnaire used together with quantitative results can be found in appendix 3.0. Improvements to the main doctoral research, which the initial study indicated should be made, were incorporated into the main study. A short summary of the changes can be found in the bias/validity section below.

The initial study involved an analysis of the 'best' and 'worst' classes, 2 in total, within the Jobskills School on the basis of their attendance. Although Jobskills is a school containing 248 full time students taught by 15 teachers in approximately 20 classes, it is unlike the other five schools. It operates independently and therefore the students and staff interviewed were not involved in the larger investigation. As a result there was no contamination of the larger study by the use of respondents or schools who were involved in the pilot study, which might be argued to have been a possible influence. The pay of Jobskills students is partly dependent on attendance and is therefore

a motivating factor relating to retention, which is not generally present in the rest of the institute. They are, therefore atypical of the rest of the student population, so any conclusions reached were treated with caution. In addition, they operate on a timetable that does not finish/start at the same time, June and September, as the rest of the institute. Consequently those who have shown poor retention records remained available for interview for the initial study.

This author met with the Jobskills senior manager and tutors to establish which two classes contained the maximum and minimum percentage of regular attendees, defined to be those students with a greater than 80% and less than 60% attendance record respectively. Having established which two groups were involved, Permission from students was obtained and in relevant cases, parents – this is described below in the 'Access' section. A questionnaire was then distributed to the students from these classes for confidential completion. After the analysis of these questionnaires was completed, the three highest and three lowest attendees from each class and their two tutors were interviewed about their own views on the issue of retention and attendance. It was not possible, given time constraints to undertake pilot management interviews in the Initial Study.

Main Study Design

The overall strategy of the main study was designed to ensure that the perspectives of the three stakeholders, students, staff and management - the three interested groups of the 'harmony triangle' of figure 2.4 were gathered and analysed. It was hoped that lessons learnt from this study could be used in an effort to minimise the differences between them - schematically this can be thought of as minimising the lengths of the lines of the triangle.

As the opinions of the three main stakeholders were to be sought, the instruments to be used were chosen to be a questionnaire to initially canvass the sample of student opinion from a 'representative' class from each of the other 6 schools, followed by interviews of the best 2 and worst 2 attendees from these classes. The survey

continued with interviews of a sample of 6 staff, who were tutors to these classes and two of whom were the quality and student services managers, as well as three senior staff, the Director and his 2 Assistant Directors - see rationale and descriptions of this strategy and chosen samples in the Instruments section below. The representative classes from each school were chosen so as to fulfil the criteria that they were in their first year, viable, had a history of some non-completers and were taught by the same set of tutors each year. One representative class was chosen as opposed to the two 'best' and 'worst' classes of the initial study because analysing one class was easier than two. In addition, as differing attendance patterns each year among various subjects and courses meant that these 'best' and 'worst' classes changed and as the relevant tutors also changed, unnecessary bias might have been introduced. The selection of one representative class would also allow more meaningful comparisons in retention between such classes in a future study on this subject.

The 6 'representative' classes were selected from Year 1 only, because as Davies (1995) found in a study of a similar population of 16-19 year old students, that of those who withdraw, 82% did so during the first year. It seems therefore that an analysis of year 2 would bring little extra information. In addition, as a full time tutor with limited time and resources, this author restricted the sample to this 16-19 year old stratum. The lecturers of the schools involved which were Social Science, Informatics and Design, Applied Science, Administration and Education, Built Environment, as well as Business and Leisure Studies supplied data on attendances. The determination of which classes were deemed to be representative of each school was completed before the end of December 2004 - the point at which sufficient time would still be available to execute the interviews and questionnaires: it was also beyond the critical initial six week period during which students are at most risk of withdrawal (Gutteridge 2001).

As is mentioned above, all students in the classes were given a questionnaire for completion and subsequently the best and worst

two attendees within each class were then interviewed to explore in more depth points and issues that arose from the questionnaire. Six withdrawn students were also sent the questionnaire and were subsequently interviewed - see 'samples' in the Instruments section. However it was also important for those students with the best attendance records to be surveyed, as Palmer (2001p.355) states "completers represent the majority of FE students, further research into the reasons for staying might offer helpful insights into the retention of new groups..." It was therefore important to survey the opinions of continuing students in this research study. This method of sampling ensured that all schools and 'representative' programmes of study and the students within them would then have been considered. The student survey was followed by a series of staff and management interviews, which explored their views on the research questions shown above and sought suggestions for improvements. There was little change to the original wording from the pilot study or sequences of questions and having performed thorough preparation with a small pilot interview with my head of school and two colleagues who tested the experience with me, I feel that potential 'teething' problems were eliminated. The fieldwork for the study finished with a desk search, which was also employed to elicit information about how LNIFHE managed retention through policy design and implementation. This analysis was carried out at the end of the 2nd year of the study.

In summary, the main study therefore comprised of an analysis of:

- The views and perceptions of management, staff and students on retention and the factors affecting retention at LNIFHE.
- Performance indicators for measuring retention and how they were generated used and refined.
- Management of quality control and assurance.
- Management of the support and guidance process.
- Strategies employed at LNIFHE to improve retention

Data was collected on these topics using research instruments shown in Table 3.1 below.

Aims/ Research Questions	Instruments Used				
	Student Questionnaire <u>Appendix 3.2</u>	Student Interview <u>Appendices 3.3, 3.6</u>	Staff Interview <u>Appendix 3.4</u>	Management Interview <u>Appendix 3.5</u>	Document Analysis/ Research
Aim 1 Question 1				√	√
Aim 1 Question 2			√	√	
Aim 1 Question 3	√	√	√	√	
Aim 2 Question 4			√	√	√
Aim 2 Question 5	√	√	√	√	
Aim 3 Question 6			√	√	√
Aim 3 Question 7			√	√	√
Aim 3 Question 8	√	√	√	√	
Aim 4 Question 9			√	√	√

Table 3.1 Data Collection Grid

Access

Interviewees' consent beforehand was obtained by adopting a systematic approach to negotiating access - all relevant staff and students were informed about the project fully and asked for their agreement to participate (see letter appendix 3.1). In the case of the withdrawn students- initially they were telephoned and when agreement to proceed was given, by parents in the case of those under 18, the interview was conducted. In the year before beginning the interviews for the main study, I ensured that all staff in the institute became aware of this research and the part that they would be asked to play. This was done by means of 'word of mouth', email and short talks to the six schools' staff at their monthly meetings. Any staff not present were contacted and a meeting was arranged with me to brief them. As soon as the identity of the classes to be monitored was established, all relevant staff were asked for both their and management's permission to take part in the research. The parents of students under eighteen years old at the commencement of the questionnaire phase were contacted by letter in order to seek/gain their permission (appendix 3.1). All participants were assured that the process was completely confidential – no-one's name was associated with any comments in this case study.

Bias - The Role of the Researcher

The author is a promoted lecturer of mathematics in charge of new course developments, a post, which necessitates teaching students and maintaining contact / liaison with most tutors. In this research project, I acted in the role of interested researcher, helping the staff and management to improve on performances - because I was concerned with what was happening and had a stake in the subject – i.e. success for my organisation. As this project was supported by the senior management team, I did not anticipate or experience problems connected with confidentiality, interviewing staff of different status such as those found by Scott and Porter (1983), or personal and discipline hostility (Scott 1984, Reisman 1958 respectively). Regarding my dealings with the students, as Hargreaves (1967) stated than when he gave up his teacher role – his authority and acted as a researcher, conflict with his students was minimised and relations with them was improved. In this light, this author adopted a consensual approach and clarified to the students that my role was one of researcher as opposed to tutor. This change of role and lessening of 'my power' was exploited to elicit maximum openness and honesty with the students. As I was not their personal tutor, I am confident that honesty and openness prevailed among them.

Insider Research

As this project also involved researching peers in familiar settings by the author, it was important to comment on 'insider research'. The most common problem with this type of research has been one of familiarity, whether with one's peers or familiar routines such as teaching. This was highlighted by Hockey (1993, p.208) who suggested a solution where the insider researcher (IR) should 'make the familiar strange'. Developing this strategy, Delamont (1981) encouraged IRs to focus on unfamiliar territories, which made the familiar become highlighted in such a way as to encourage curiosity in the researcher. In this project, this suggestion was used for example when senior management were interviewed, the practices and environment of whom were outside this author's normal or

familiar experience as I have little daily contact with senior management. Another potential 'familiarity' problem, highlighted by Spradley (1979) is the tendency for an IR to take for granted the patterns and regularities under study or, in the words of Hockey (1993 p. 221) *"that which is closest may well be that which is the most difficult to see"*. As the formulation of this research problem was largely constructed in a higher academic setting before entering the field of study, this problem was largely avoided. The author agrees with the observation of Aguilar (1981) who suggested that many of the objects of such a study would be pre-selected according to theoretical criteria and therefore less likely to be influenced by familiarity of the researcher. This was the case in this research study

It is also suggested (Spradley 1979) that informants may feel uncomfortable when being interviewed. Possible reasons for this could be the misuse of such information gleaned could affect a tutor's career. Griffiths (1985) forwarded a solution to this by suggesting that investigations in pursuance of professional self-development usually mitigated this problem. This situation was the case here, as I am the author and was pursuing a doctorate as part of my staff development. My excellent working relationships with other tutors and well-developed communicative skills were both major and positive influences on this research. Any potential bias or distortion connected to this role was further minimised by adopting a policy of openness and honesty with peers and superiors and in a position of deep mutual trust. Cognisant of the work of Wragg (1994), I reduced bias, by obtaining the required consent above. To further reduce bias in the process, the interviews with the tutors preceded the student questionnaire. The reason for this was that if staff had seen the student questionnaire, it may have influenced their potential answers.

To minimise the potential problem of 'intimate knowledge' (Platt 1981), this author carefully reflected on who was to be interviewed and how to respond in the research situation. In addition, the author used tact and flexibility and adopted a role of both friend and researcher. As stated above, staff and parents of students under 18

were sent an explanatory letter asking for permission to conduct the interview with their son/daughter. Interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to elicit maximum detail and useful information from respondents. During the interviews, the author maintained an objective and dispassionate approach, whilst keep a discerning yet friendly and professional attitude at all times. To avoid the process known as 'filtering' (Platt 1981) where respondents offer their conclusions on the data that is the job of the researcher, the interview process began with an explanation of precisely what was required and what was not.

Ethics

The ethics of practitioner research are important and were taken note of in this case study. Although information gathered was treated confidentially, nevertheless as a wider audience may in future share the results of this enquiry, there was a danger that colleagues may have felt that they were, in the words of Nias, 1988, p.10 "opened to self doubt and criticism" and that "schools (and colleges) may be opened to examination... with differences and divisions exacerbated". In order to minimise any such problems this author executed sound ethical practices and showed colleagues that good practices were being adhered to. Apart from the director, no names were attached to any documents, as this was done using a random numbering system. Information from replies would be untraceable to source, everyone had the right to withdraw participation at any time and leading questions were avoided. The purpose, nature and use of the end product of the study were explained and participants were fully made aware of this before they gave informed consent. All participants were fully at ease during the whole process, having seen the interview questions beforehand and my record of their replies afterwards.

Reliability and Validity

Great care was taken to minimise any threat to reliability or validity during the process. The validity of the research depended on three main themes – unobtrusive measures to ensure data reflects the scene studied respondent validation and triangulation. As the

questionnaires were collected anonymously - no names on student forms - it could be stated that this was almost as unobtrusive as qualitative research could have been. The author is also a tutor in the institute concerned and was therefore a participant observer as well as an 'insider', the disadvantages and safeguards against this were discussed above. To improve on validity further, any potential sources of bias were minimised. In the interviewing phase, these sources included (Cohen et. al. 2001):

- Attitudes, expectations and opinions of the interviewer
- A tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in their own image and seek answers to support preconceived notions
- Misunderstandings as to what is being said in response, by interviewee or what is being asked by interviewer.

Regarding the first two points, I adopted a dispassionate approach, minimising the impact of opinions etc. and views of interviewees. Regarding potential misunderstandings, this author when testing perspectives used respondent validation. All interviewees were shown the contemporaneous notes taken at interview - when testing institute processes this method risked introducing bias on behalf of the staff, the views of whom may have been dominated by their role within LNIFHE. These notes were shown to interviewees after commission to electronic form as a final insurance of accuracy and put in the diary for reflection and consideration later. Following each session an interview checklist of table 3.2 was reviewed to ensure that the maximum possible benefit was obtained.

- Did I establish rapport from the start?
- Did I clearly state my aims and objectives?
- Did we agree a shared agenda and objectives?
- Did I listen fully to the discourse?
- Did I summarise accurately?
- Did I follow my interview plan? If not, was that appropriate?
- Did we reach a consensus for future action?
- Did we both gain from the interview?
- What will I do differently next time?

Table 3.2: A Post Interview Checklist (Shapiro 1993).

To achieve greater reliability, I took care to avoid as far as possible some additional potential causes of bias (from Oppenheim 1992, p.96-97). They were

- Biased sampling
- Poor rapport
- Changes to wording or sequence of questions
- Poor prompting
- Poor use of support materials
- Poor recording of responses
- Poor handling of difficult interviews.

Triangulation is a tool, which was used to improve validation. After collating their responses, triangulation allowed comparisons and contrasts among the varied respondents to yield interesting and differing viewpoints on the same processes/factors influencing retention. Denzin (1970) described the particular triangulation process used in this research study as *methodological triangulation*, where the same method - questionnaire, interview or analysis, is used on different occasions and different individual methods - questionnaire, interview, analysis, are used on different objects - the classes.

Modifications Made - Due to the Initial Study

Overall, the contribution from the initial study was useful in the final design of the student questionnaire as well as the student and staff interviews. The size of the student sample used in the main study was reduced from a proposed 2 classes per school to one and from the 3-best/3 worst attendees to 2 and 2 respectively. This was done to reduce the workload and ensure that more time was devoted productively to other aspects of this case study. Very few open ended questions were answered in the initial study. To optimise completion rates and ensure a higher percentage of open-ended questions were attempted, the questionnaire was administered and replies collected during class time. In addition, the wording of some questions was simplified and the students were verbally encouraged, without interference, to volunteer answers to such questions. The

content of some questions had to be amended to include comprehensive coverage of the research questions. A more dispassionate approach to my interviewing technique was employed so that students did not repeat an answer that they thought I wanted to hear. The questions concerning advice/guidance/quality processes on the staff interview schedules were expanded and made more comprehensive in order to elicit detailed answers from staff.

Modifications Made - Due to Mock Interviews with Colleagues

Overall the pilot interviews, using 3 volunteers, 2 of whom were colleagues and one, my Head of School, who gave his opinion on both the staff and management interview schedules, from a management perspective, lasted 35-40 minutes instead of the projected 25-30. I therefore changed the projected times on the staff letter (appendix 3.1). The term 'performance indicators' had to be explained to the 2 members of staff involved in the pilot interviews. As a result, question 1 had to be redesigned to include prompts - for example "performance indicators such as students' attentiveness in class or their success in homeworks" to aid understanding and not to inappropriately influence the respondents' answers. As a result of the analysis of responses of the 2 volunteers, it was realised that research questions 3.6 and 3.8 were not fully addressed in the interview schedule. This was rectified by the inclusion and altered design to include ranking of question 13, for example "what features of the quality control and quality assurance processes are influential in relation to retention? Please rank them and give reasons". In addition, a similar problem to question 1 arose later in that slight misunderstandings of the terms *quality control* and *quality assurance* led to the inclusion of prompts such as self-evaluating and appraisals respectively. Finally, in order to examine the staff opinion of the strategy employed at LNIFHE and the Creemers model of effectiveness, a question was included at the end of both the tutors' and managers' interview schedules. This ensured that the case study did not depend on the desk search alone to examine the applicability of Creemers' approach to the methods and strategies employed by LNIFHE. Although the manager involved in the pilot interview was au

fait with the terms, he thought that it would be a good idea to include the prompts, for example performance indicators such as students' attentiveness - mentioned above.

Instruments used and Rationale

Some of the instruments covered multiple aims and research questions, which can be viewed in the data collection table 3.1. Interview schedules and questionnaires are shown in appendices 3.2 – 3.5. Both questionnaires and interviews were designed to explore the research questions of this study. As a result of the literature review, it was discovered that the opinions of stakeholders, at all levels of LNIFHE as well as the differences and similarities of their perspectives should be canvassed. Particular themes were included as a result of the literature review, for example questions on motivation for students as well as staff appeared on their questionnaire and interview schedules, as did the model of Creemers on both tutors and management schedules. The instruments used were as follows.

Analysis of Documents / Desk Search

This was essential to gather relevant information on institute policies, plans and procedures - a rich source of information for these was found in the current Institute Development Plan. It was therefore deemed to be a good method of determining the information required to answer research question 4.9.

Student Questionnaires

A total 69 current students replied out of 71 canvassed, a response rate of 97% and all 6 withdrawn students also participated (100%). Details of the sample for the questionnaire part of the survey can be found in table 3.3.

Class Type Part or Full time & Duration	School	Number in Class as of Start of 2 nd Week in Sept	Numbers Returning Questionnaires	Max number of days Attendance Up To Jan1	Actual Attendance Up to Jan1	Percentage = Actual/Possible Then X 100	Number of Withdrawals
'A' Level Politics Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Social Science	14	13 (Out of 14 still in class)	45	Student A Student B Student C Student D	100 100 80 78	None
AVCE ICT Full-time Year 1 Group 1A (2 year course)	Informatics & Design	17	13 (Out of 13 still in class)	14	Student A Student B Student C Student D	93 93 64 64	2 *2 others left after 'taster week'
'A' Level Chemistry Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Applied Science	12	12 (out of 12 still in class)	45	Student A Student B Student C Student D	98 98 66 64	None
OCR Certificate in Administration Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Administration & Education	10	9 (out of 9 still in class)	45	Student A Student B Student C Student D	100 98 53 36	1
NVQ Plastering Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Built Environment	12	9 (out of 10 still in class)	30	Student A Student B Student C Student D	100 100 80 78	2
NVQ Hairdressing level 2 – year 1 (2 year course)	Business & Leisure	14	13 (out of 13 still in class)	30	Student A Student B Student C Student D	90 90 67 45	1

Table 3.3 Details of surveyed classes

The use of questionnaires was justified because with a relatively large total number involved, analysis was quick and anonymity 'almost' guaranteed. The students handed the completed forms back directly to me for analysis. I am satisfied that with these safeguards in place, honesty prevailed. Those students absent on the day of the administration of the questionnaire were issued with the questions subsequently and completed forms were collected in the same manner as before. Withdrawn students were telephoned and persuaded to complete and return it in a prepaid envelope. In this way, the response rate was boosted. Student questionnaires examined opinions of reasons for choice of course, induction procedures and quality of initial and subsequent guidance, support, advice, teaching and effective tutor-contact – these were the deemed to be the most influential areas on retention by other authors in the literature review (e.g. Martinez 1996, 1997 and Davies 1999). The questionnaires were completed and returned confidentially then analysed objectively. Before administering the questionnaire to each of the five classes, I read out the statement assuring students of confidentiality and asked for full comments and honesty in all answers. This statement can be found in appendix 3.2, preceding the questions.

Student and Staff Interviews

The total numbers involved were – 30 students, 24 current plus 6 withdrawn; 6 tutors and 3 senior management, the two Assistant Directors and Director. As interviews are designed to allow participants to comment and expand on answers or issues which might arise during the interview or which arose from the student questionnaires, and the interviewer to probe and explore them contemporaneously, they were deemed to be an essential methodological tool for this survey which was set up in part to analyse staff and student opinion. In many of the action research papers from the literature review, this type of survey was found to be very effective at eliciting opinion (e.g. by Medway and Pennay, 1994). There are also some negative aspects to interviewing such as filtering and familiarity that have been dealt with above. Although time consuming to prepare, write up and analyse, this author felt that the interview process was well worthwhile, satisfying and essential.

Descriptions of the Samples

Management - The sample chosen were the director and two assistant directors. This author felt that in any study of the opinion of management, the selection of the top echelon as the sample was essential. The interview was deemed to be the most appropriate instrument for the reasons stated above. Preceding these interviews, a pilot interview with an uninvolved head of school was conducted to test for any problems and then refine or remove them.

Staff - The sample chosen were the six tutors in charge of the 6 representative classes chosen for the survey. Each of these classes came out one of 6 schools at LNIFHE - the seventh; Jobskills was used as the Initial Study in the first year of this research and did not re-appear here. The quality and support managers, who also happened to be tutors of the group of representative classes, were therefore selected as part of the tutor group. Having the two most relevant heads in charge of two of the key components of this research, quality and support, being interviewed as part of this survey allowed additional insight to be introduced to the study. The

tutors of the 6 classes were happy to be involved in the research and as such, were duly selected by me. The pros and cons of interviewing are described above for this group.

Student selection - Interviews were performed with the selected students to tease out issues that arose from the questionnaires. The 24 students chosen were the 2 best and 2 worst attendees from each of the 6 classes. As information gleaned from withdrawn students was found to be very important by Martinez (1995) and Barwuah et. al. (1997), a determined and successful effort was made to survey all 6 such students. Normally the interview schedule used for withdrawn students is the one in appendix 3.6, but for the purposes of this study, I used the same set of questions as with the completing students- this was done to facilitate comparison of their replies. When speaking to the withdrawn students on the telephone, I asked some of the questions in the past tense so that they made sense. All these interviews were completed between March and May 2005. Withdrawn students are defined to be those who have not attended for 4 consecutive weeks or who stated that they have withdrawn.

Data, Coding and Analysis Techniques

Data analysis can be developed in five ways (Silverman (2003 p.152) :

1. Focus on data, which are of high quality and easiest to collect.
2. Focus on one process within those data.
3. Narrow down to one part of that process.
4. Compare sub samples of the population using the comparative method.
5. Generate topics with a scope outside the substantive area of the research.

This survey used a combination of the above methods, targeting subjects who could be easily contacted and surveyed. One process at a time was examined, for example support and guidance and compared across students and staff respondents using comparison and triangulation. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) offer this way of developing analysis of observational data. It was used here and involves these stages:

1. An initial attempt to develop categories that illuminate the data. *In this survey, the categories were developed under the headings of aims of the research study.*
2. An attempt to 'saturate' these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance. *Limited time prevented the surveying of many sets of data, but a snapshot of opinion was obtained and themes emerged.*
3. Developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting. *This can be thought of as applying the results more widely both within LNIFHE and the FHE environment generally.*

Reporting the Questionnaire

Questions that consisted of several boxes to be ticked on the student questionnaire did not require coding as the *Snap* software was designed to do this automatically and gave relevant totals in the output both in report and graphical form. The more open-ended questions on the questionnaire and student/staff interviews were written up thematically post session when patterns of responses appeared. As interview transcripts / notes of interviews were made, points and comments were highlighted. The method of inductive reasoning, where a study of a number of cases leads to a hypothesis and generalisation was used. Mouly (1978) explained that if one collected enough data, whilst maintaining objectivity, inherent relationships pertaining to the general case would emerge to be seen by the alert observer. Therefore themes emerged as the amount of information increased during the survey. This data was then categorised and analysed in a systematic way. Two potential problems were possible here. These categories formed a 'powerful conceptual grid' (Atkinson, 1992:459) that proved very useful in organising the data analysis, however the uncategorised data was also accounted for by a careful 2nd sifting of the interview transcripts with this problem in mind. The second potential problem was making the assumption that there is a one to one correspondence between these categories and the aspects of reality being described. In

research, as Weber (1949) observed, some authors categorise using 'hypothetical concepts', which are judged against their usefulness rather than their accuracy. Great care was taken in this research study when categorising the data. The author tried to construct the categories in the same vein as Sacks, who stated "To explain a phenomenon the categories must be as real as the thing which I started out to explain" (1992, Vol. 1:316).

Transcribing and Reporting the Interviews

This crucial step contained the potential for "data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity" (Seidman 1991 p. 281). An interview is a social encounter as well as a data collection exercise; the problem with too much transcription is that it becomes solely a record of data rather than a record of a social encounter. To overcome this problem as much as possible, this author tried to include other types of data, such as the tone of an answer - a full list of types of data that were borne in mind before transcription can be found in appendix 3.8. In the survey, when confronted with unusual body language, or tone during a response or confusion during the delivery of a question, this author repeated the question and carefully noted the answer.

Inferences were also drawn from responses where a particular emphasis was made. After transcribing, all participants were shown the written report and agreement was sought and received as to its accuracy. Complete agreement was received and I am satisfied with the accuracy of the process.

CHAPTER 4

College Development Plan (CDP): Review of Retention Strategies and Procedures

Introduction

The chapter will be presented with a review of the retention related strategies and policies of the CDP of 04-05 followed by a discussion of links between these policies and the model of Creemers, discussed in chapter 2. An analysis of the college development plan has indicated that like all other institutes in Northern Ireland, LNIFHE does not have a retention policy as an entity in its own right. There is a multiplicity of policies, which are listed in appendix 4.1 covering various areas, some of which have been found to be related to and important in the optimisation of retention. Those most closely associated with retention are highlighted in this appendix and are reproduced in table 4.1, which is also in appendix 4.1. This review has been performed to examine the official LNIFHE policy on retention and to explore research questions 1.1, 2.4 and 3.7, which involve performance indicators employed to measure retention and the management of quality and support respectively. These themes have repeatedly occurred in the literature review as being important in the area of retention.

Review of Retention Related Strategies and Policy Documents of the CDP

The CDP in use when the fieldwork for this study was being performed was the 2004-2005 plan, which contained external and internal elements. Externally, the CDP sought to cater for the educational and training and social needs for all students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and monitored possible changes in those needs. Increased links were planned with local organisations, employers and with feeder schools, given their influence on retention in FHE. Internally, catering for students with

learning difficulties or disabilities and targeting social need are priorities, utilising the learning support service. The careers service has been integrated into all students' programmes. Support for students is a very important factor when considering retention and is a priority for this college. The role of the student services officer in providing advice and guidance continues to be of benefit to the students. The administration of the student support fund has alleviated financial hardship for many students while the enhanced adult guidance service has enabled students to make better informed choices about their choice of programme in the Institute. Students are also supported in the resolution of personal problems, many of which can have a detrimental affect on their studies and completion of their courses.

Regarding quality assurance and control together with their associated management arrangements, significant staff resources have been made available to manage quality related procedures. Overall responsibility for quality rests with the deputy director and assistant director with monthly monitoring of targets by the management team ensuring that performance and standards are controlled. The management team monitors progress on achievement of specific objectives and targets on the third Tuesday of each month. This also includes consideration of performance in relation to targets for student retention and achievement. This is supplemented by the curriculum and quality committee, which regularly reviews programme performance. Course teams meet regularly to monitor and review student performance with minutes provided to HOS. This allows for prompt action to be taken to maintain standards and quality of provision, recognised to be another important factor in student retention. In addition, the curriculum and quality committee considers examination results, reports from the Education and Training Inspectorate, external verifiers and the institute's standards moderator, who also reports on internal verification within course teams. This committee oversees ongoing issues of programme quality and monitors completion of any action

points arising from inspection or verifier reports. The post-induction student evaluation, pre-exit student evaluation and the marketing survey all provide additional information from students on course availability, induction procedures, tutoring and assessment.

Managers provide responses to the issues raised in the above surveys and reports are made to the Education Committee of the Governing Body in relation to inspections, curriculum development and the Summary Annual Course Review.

The Institute uses the standards from IQ: RS (2003) to self-assess the effectiveness of provision of education and training in response to local circumstances and meeting the needs of the learner (-see cycle in appendix 4.2). This document was upgraded to encompass the needs of further education in 2003 and provides an internal dimension of quality assurance. Self-evaluation reports generated by the institute's annual course review process are intended to be key elements within the Institute's quality assurance arrangements and enable staff, middle and senior managers to work together to improve provision and raise standards. These reports also provide the strategically important process for target setting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The annual course review documentation reflects the standards contained within IQ: RS manual. Standards, which are considered for example, how well the learners achieve, the standard of the learners' work in relation to their ability, good retention rates and achievement in external examinations. A complete list can be viewed in appendix 4.3.

In June each year course teams self-evaluate performance against the standards of IQ: RS. Course team, heads of school and senior managers separately consider performance against the standards' performance indicators contained within the course review form – these can be viewed in appendices 4.2 and 4.3. The team, heads of school and senior managers detail strengths, evidence to support the strengths and areas for improvement. The programme, area and organisation performance is then graded. Targets are set for

enrolment, retention, achievement and progression on the following academic year within the action plan at course team level. The completed course review form and action plan is forwarded to HOS and deputy director who uses this information to compile the summary annual course review for forwarding to the governing body. The annual course review grades of performance indicators are presented to all staff at the general staff meeting at the beginning of each year. In the autumn the deputy director and assistant director use the summary annual course review to identify courses where performance gives cause for concern. They meet with the course co-ordinator to discuss reasons for low performance and to review implementation of the action plan. Each HOS presents data by course showing enrolment in September and monthly retention and achievement to the date of the meeting. Specific issues of concern are discussed and the HOS reports on action taken by the course co-ordinator and other staff. This is an open and transparent means of reviewing performance within the year. The Education and Training Inspectorate provide the external dimension of quality assurance. Self-evaluation reports provide an important source of evidence for the Inspectorate when undertaking inspections. The Institute uses the inspection reports to inform improvements to practice.

To motivate, develop and enhance the leadership and management capacity of all staff throughout the Institute, staff development opportunities, which are clearly linked to Institute goals are provided. Staff motivation and satisfaction, factors important in keeping students motivated as articulated by Owen and Davies (2003) should also be improved by the staff training that has been offered in various retention-related areas including tutoring and interviewing skills. The latter of these will be very useful in allocating students to their correct courses, a critically important feature in the retention of students as found by various authors such as Clarke (2001). Staff development was provided at Easter 2004 and June 2004 to lecturing staff on the revised course review cycle, standards, course review forms, action plans, and the requirement that course teams have as a standing

agenda on monthly team meetings 'action plan' from the previous June. Finally, a retention strategy was piloted on selected courses during 04-05 and shows improvements in retention where students were identified as being 'at risk' of leaving the programme.

Performance indicators such as how many targets, contained within the ISLA forms are met, examination performances, and retention targets such as those outlined in the IQ: RS document are used.

These indicators are combined with data from the student appraisals and analysed with the results of these reviews compiled and used to inform and influence each subsequent college development plan.

The growing importance of support and guidance in student retention was recognised and a group of related policies, 1, 3, 23, 35, 38, 39, 40 and 41 were constructed to improve this provision. The guidance and support systems are closely monitored to ensure that the main factors known to impact on retention are addressed. These systems themselves which are known to be factors which are influential on retention have been analysed and a new addition, policy number 1 on monitoring 'at risk' students has been constructed by senior management. This policy was informed by the work of authors such as McMahan et.al. (2004) and is designed to address the negative impact on retention caused by 'at risk' students. A priority area, dealt with by the quality policy 31, has been identified within the CDP: - to implement a transparent reporting system that accurately measures progress in achieving higher student retention year on year.

Among other things, new refined ISLA forms, directly stemming from policy 39 and reporting methods including two student electronic appraisals in November and May each year to continuously monitor staff performance were introduced. This innovation in the case of the November appraisal has already been of some help to LNIFHE in the collation of current data on the evolving retention situation. For example factors such as hours working in part time jobs being detrimental to their retention consistent with findings of McCoy and Smyth (2005) have arisen and where possible, addressed during tutor contact time.

At a retention seminar in August 2004 at LNIFHE, David Wilce argued that the pivotal importance and centrality of the student must be recognised and reflected in our approach to students. As a result, the management team have developed a new approach which will put the learner and learning as central to what we do. This has been carried through in our objectives and plans for 2005-06 and the new student centred strategy can be viewed in appendix 4.4 along with associated policies 2, 3, 5, 10, 12, 26, 30-41, 46 and 115, which reflect the importance of providing support and guidance to students to optimise retention and concurs with the ideas of many other authors as reported in the literature review.

To keep abreast of current developments and update the skills of its staff, LNIFHE sends some staff annually on curriculum development training. For example, in the academic year 2003/2004 LNIFHE was involved in an LSDA curriculum project on retention - this author was part of that team. The outcomes from this project were embedded in the form of policies 3, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 35, 38 - 41, 46, 70 and 115 within the Institute in 2005-06. Although not yet fully operational, the construction of these policies, partly informed by McMahon et. al. (2004) and partly researched by internal teams of tutors has also gone some way towards motivating some of our staff. Individual tutors reported that they produce their own progression activities and motivate students in their own ways, but as a strategy, these activities are not yet performed in a centrally organised way.

Links between the Model of Creemers and LNIFHE Policies

By looking at the policy list in table 4.2 below and beside them, the numbers linking them to the LNIFHE policies of appendix 4.1, one can infer a planned linkage at the context, school and classroom levels. For example, policy 31 is the Quality Policy, which details how LNIFHE provides quality across all levels of the institute. Policy 41, the Complaints Policy details how complaints are dealt with and how LNIFHE can provide qualitative outcomes. Policy 8, the National Guidelines for Schedules details the allocations of resources for units

on programmes. Within this it can be seen that specific times for programme modules are recommended. From the many policies on opportunity, for example in policy 2, Adult Basic Education it can be seen that LNIFHE allocates every opportunity possible for those less fortunate who need such help. These links, coupled with the addressing of the strategic targets of appendix 4.5 can be seen as forming the constancy, consistency and control across the three dimensions portrayed in Creemers' model. An example of this can be seen in specific objectives 1.19 and 1.20 of appendix 4.5 where, embedding of the centre of excellence activities is performed by the head of school and his staff with constant planning, analysing and evaluating to ensure success. Hence the model of Creemers is useful in interpreting policy intentions.

QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy for effectiveness (results, quality of teaching, organisational) – policies 4,7,8,23,31,41, in appendix 4.1 • Policy on evaluation (internal and external appraisal and inspection) - policies 15, 31, 39 in appendix 4.1. • Training/support system (Staff Development with Student Support, Careers Advice and Counselling) – policies 1,2,5,12,10,11,26,30,34,35,38,40, 46,47,70,71,72, 74, 93 in appendix 4.1 • Funding based on outcomes (results, SPURS and FTE's) - policies 88 in appendix 4.1
TIME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National guidelines for schedules - policy 8, Appendix 4.1 • Supervision of time schedules - policies 42,43, - appendix 4.1
OPPORTUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National guidelines for curriculum - policies 11,12,13,14,24,25,33 in appendix 4.1 • Policy on Opportunity – policies 2,3,9,10,12,26,58,59,92,115 in appendix 4.1

TABLE 4.2 Contextual Effectiveness Framework for LNIFHE.

Our effectiveness is also determined by our students - the market with the indicators essentially being the outcomes achieved by students such as success in progressing to work or higher education. Examination successes, in some subjects have attracted a large range of students. These outcomes are an important indicator of effectiveness and are covered by the policies 4, 7, 8, 23, 31 and 41. Some account is taken by LNIFHE of the inputs. Other indicators, processes - the idea of measuring effort, are regularly monitored. LNIFHE uses hours taught against units completed and has four modes of inspection: appraisal by senior management, inspection by DE, student questionnaires -see appendix 4.5 Strategic Objectives and self-reports - see appendix 4.1 - policies.

The coherence, constancy, cohesion and supervision elements can be seen to be espoused to at the context, school and classroom level by reading the institute's strategic objectives in appendix 4.5. For example when addressing strategic objective 1.10 – to achieve a minimum grade 2 in ETI inspections – in order to improve retention LNIFHE has drawn up a quality policy (31) which requires a quality checklist to be drawn up for each full time student. Each course team are required to ensure that students receive the quality experience for which the checklist has been produced. This is meant to be done by creating and rigorously implementing action plans, which are drawn up and refined each year. Clearly, as this refers to all full time students and involves tutors as well as senior managers, it is the aim of the policy that this is applied across the three levels. It is constant and cohesive as all teaching and management staff and full time students are involved in the process. In addition, it is logical and if applied consistently, would therefore be coherent. As the implementation and review of action plans involve staff observing the delivery of quality to students as well as senior management similarly observing staff delivering quality and the inspectorate keeping an eye on senior staff, the element of supervision is clearly present at all levels.

It should be noted that the scenario described above is at the level of policy intention and, as will be seen in the following chapter, which surveys stakeholder opinion is not necessarily the case at the level of practice, where there are differences in perspectives of some of the stakeholders. This is an example of an implementation gap between policy and practice.

Summary

Through these policies, LNIFHE could be viewed as attempting to improve on the following processes:-

- Tutorial / induction / support / guidance processes,
- Monitoring and refining the QA and QC processes,
- Monitoring / tracking / disciplinary processes,
- Detecting learning needs, monitoring 'at risk' students early on in a course,
- Developing a focus on retention among all staff.

The last two points are at the developmental stage. This approach bears close resemblance to the work of Martinez (1996, 1997) who identified 6 elements, most or all of which must be included in retention models/strategies to optimise the chance of success. He also stated that almost all researchers in this area agreed with this statement. The 6 elements are reproduced below in table 4.3.

There is a constant and ongoing system of appraisal, target setting, reporting, reviewing and planning employed by management at LNIFHE to manage the application and addressing of performance indicators as well as quality provision. However the survey results suggest that this is not being fully applied at tutors' level due to a combination of communication and motivational elements. This system is useful and systematic in nature but does not yet directly investigate tutoring staff opinion apart from what is gleaned from monthly school meetings. It could be argued that this is another example of an implementation gap.

1. Induction, sorting students appropriately (ensure a good match between student and courses by improving pre-entry information).
Identifying 'at risk' students.
2. Advice and guidance, supporting them in all aspects (financial, learning, study and curriculum enrichment programmes).
3. Connecting them to college by encouraging personal responsibility for learning (mentoring schemes and enhanced tutorial packages).
4. Motivating and transforming students by raising expectations, and self-belief through careers and progression activities.
5. Motivating staff and transforming the colleges by developing cultures and implementing teaching and curriculum design strategies.
6. Managerial (developing whole college strategies, monitoring, procedures, student tracking and MIS systems) Martinez and Munday (1998), Davies (1999)

**TABLE 4.3 The essential 6 elements for retention models
(Martinez 1996, 1997)**

The six elements above form a mediative and dynamic process or a series of interactive processes with the desired outcome of improving retention.

CHAPTER 5

Data Report, Analysis and Interpretation

The chapter presents the findings of perspectives of the senior managers, tutors and students linked to the aims and research questions of this research study. After each report, an interpretation and analysis will follow. A general comparison and summary will complete the chapter.

Senior Management – For this interview schedule, see appendix 3.5

Aim 1 Performance Indicators

As regards performance indicators used by LNIFHE, there was an interesting contrast in the perspectives of the three most senior managers with one Assistant Director (AD)'s answers entirely referring to student success and achievement, the other AD citing student achievement along with managerial mechanisms relating to reports, surveys and other data. The Director stating two of each, ranked the student features 1 and 2 - the numbers of students achieving success and the percentage completing or succeeding in relation to the numbers starting the course - and mechanisms 3 and 4. The SPURS funding was ranked 3 by the Director and one AD with Department of Education & Learning (DEL) budgets the next most prominent (4). Regarding influence on policy of the PI's, all three stated that regular monitoring allows policy to be amending 'in year' if possible to have maximum and immediate effect on optimising retention. Resources can then be targeted into areas such as staff development, curriculum design and pilot studies, such as Retention Working Group of 04/05. Analysis of all reports / reviews and the annual course review leads to fine tuning policy which in turn can influence changes in the strategic objectives of the institute. When asked to state precisely what PI's are used by LNIFHE the Director replied that at his stratum of management, cognisance had to be taken of:

- Class sizes.
- Staff / Student ratio.
- Tutor hours.
- Student hours.
- Room occupancy.
- Financial constraints / targets.

Aim 1 Factors Affecting Retention

The interview continued with discussion on which factors most influenced students in regard to retention. Results are summarised in table 5.1 below.

COMMENT – Black – Director Blue and Brown – Assistant Directors (ADs)	Positive rank	Negative Rank
Course choice/correct recruitment	123	111
Student motivation	1	
Good learning opportunities/Teaching/ Management of learning	132	4
Poor relationships	2	23
Support/ Tutoring	4422	3
Personal circumstances	4	44
Assessment	3	3

Table 5.1 Factors which most influenced retention

The discussion of why these factors were important yielded the following summary: -

The Director stated that course choice had the potential to either motivate or de-motivate a student and when motivation is present, so is 'hunger and desire'. He continued by stating that all students need the personal touch of a tutor who can build confidence and keep them focused on the course, which should, he stated be 'the correct course'. It transpires that in the research of Martinez and Munday (1998, p.106), correct course choice is the 'best predictor of student drop out'. Poor personal circumstances and relationships, the Director went on, had the potential to distract attention and overcome even the most willing learner. One of the ADs gave a

similar answer, adding that the student's inclination to remain on course was affected by good teaching, tutoring and help being available when needed. The other AD stated that correct course choice allowed expectations to be matched, career opportunity to be shaped and the learner to be challenged. Tutor- student and personal relationships interact with students' moods and actions and could be influential in retention. Finally, assessment could be motivational – if the level of difficulty is correct or de-motivational – if the volume or difficulty were too much. Only one of the senior managers stated that student motivation was influential in retention.

As regards factors impacting on staff motivation, senior managers all noted that concern for the welfare of students and love for the job were essential for staff to be and remain motivated. All answered this section generally, referring to the giving of compliments and congratulating staff and allocating mutually suitable and agreed courses to them. The Assistant Directors also stated that good communication, staff being valued by management, career opportunities and being given correct staff development were important in motivating staff. This view resonated with the study of Spours (1997). One senior manager stated that good staff motivation and morale "made his job easier". All stated that motivated staff resulted in good teaching and improved relations with peers and students, which together had a positive impact on retention. One remarked that "staff motivation was a key factor" in the battle to optimise retention.

Aim 2 Guidance and Support

On guidance and support, the Director stated that the management process enacted at induction continued to operate in similar fashion throughout the year. At organisational and school levels, he cited Student Services as having the key role in getting over the "first day syndrome" and settling in to the programmes of study. When asked what the procedures were at Course Co-ordinators level, he stated significantly "I *presume* through meetings and one to one tutorials". One of the Assistant Directors replied in very similar fashion

additionally stressing the importance of the integrity of the interviewing process at induction. Throughout the year he added that support and guidance were supplied through the Student Services and were available to all students. The other Assistant Director described in detail the management of this process at induction as consisting of

- An Initial Information session where students were interviewed, given careers advice and offered courses depending on previous and anticipated performance.
- Clear Induction arrangements where students were made aware of course requirements, tutor expectation and then given a post induction evaluation.

At Course Co-ordinators' level, he describes the role of the tutor/co-ordinator as planning the programme of induction and involving advice from the Student Services and careers officer. Throughout the year he describes the management of courses as being run essentially from Course Co-ordinators feeding up through heads of schools, careers officer and student support manager. At Course Co-ordinators level, he states that it is actually done through the tutor/ISLA process. On the effectiveness of the support processes, at all the levels the Director answered "I am not in a position to answer". The Assistant Directors described the effectiveness of the support processes at the organisational and school levels of management as being difficult to measure. As the updated (2003) IQ: RS is the process in place to self assess effectiveness and efficiency, perhaps it appears the system is not being fully applied – if so, this would constitute another implementation gap between policy and practice. They stated that perhaps students could have more effective guidance by talking to a non-tutor. It is of course possible that the IQ: RS process itself is not exhaustive and may need further fine tuning. At Course Co-ordinators level, senior managers noted that the effectiveness is evidenced through the year through reports to the regular Tuesday reporting sessions. Any required follow up action with the students is initiated. An Assistant Director suggested that it

was institute policy that a common approach to tutorial processes should be followed.

On the improvement of the guidance/ support processes at all levels, the Director firmly stated that this can be done through the appropriate use of ISLAs in conjunction with “sound tutorial support”. The Assistant Directors, answering at the organisational and school levels stated that common standardised approaches to induction processes with careers advice prominent should be employed. Throughout the year, greater use of these processes by students should be encouraged. There should be common clearly targeted focus on the implications for retention and follow up must be enacted early. At Course Co-ordinators level, during induction senior managers called for better information and clearer targets to be given to students with targets being continuously monitored for their achievement and students tracked throughout the year. There should be more staff development for tutors who until now have not been fully or sometimes even partially trained.

Aim 3 Quality Control and Assurance

The replies on which features of the quality processes that were influential on retention is summarised in table 5.2 below.

Quality Assurance	Rank	Quality Control	Rank
Positive Influences		Positive Influences	
Setting Targets	1,1,2	Inspections	1
Good Delivery	1		
Monitoring/Tracking	2		
Taking Corrective Action	3		
The Role of the Tutor/ISLA	2,4		
Negative Influences		Negative Influences	
Staff Ignoring Procedures	1		

Table 5.2 Quality processes that were influential on retention

Essentially the three respondents described QC and QA as a continuum or one process. The Director stated that the QA and QC processes were managed at the organisational level by the deputy

Director who during a monthly series of curriculum and quality meetings co-ordinates the monitoring of retention. This is summarised at the end of the year in the annual course review. An identical process is described for the role of the Course Co-ordinators at their level. One AD answered that these processes are monitored by senior management for all courses and both ADs stated at the co-ordinators' level that Course Co-ordinator review and follow up at regular team meetings were practised. The other Assistant Director simply stated the processes mentioned above, mentioning the SMT weekly meetings, Tuesday progress and external verifier's reports. Their report on motivating students can be summarised in table 5.3(i) below.

RANK 1	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5
b,e,j	a,c,b	b,c,j	a,c,g	a,j,h

Table 5.3(i) Motivation factors for students

Respondents were invited to choose from the options of table 5.3(ii)

<p>a) Curriculum design and developing programmes to help students with e.g. time management, organisation, independent study, working with others, examination techniques, overcoming examination anxiety.</p> <p>b) Quality teaching</p> <p>c) Effective tutoring</p>	<p>d) Peer support and/or Mentoring</p> <p>e) Good careers guidance</p> <p>f) Prizes and ceremonies</p> <p>g) Student learning contracts</p> <p>h) Parental involvement</p> <p>i) Disciplinary procedures</p> <p>j) Monitoring/Tracking and following up on attendance</p>
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Table 5.3 (ii) Key to factors motivating students

The letters a, b, c and j are prominent in the rankings, reflecting curriculum design and support programmes, quality teaching, effective tutoring and monitoring/tracking and follow up on poor attendance respectively.

Aim 4 Strategies for Improvement

The strategies employed by LNIFHE management to improve retention rates were reported by the three senior managers as essentially those found in table 5.4 below

- Monitoring, tracking and refining the QA, QC, support and guidance processes – in the words of one AD, these particular processes are 'extremely important in the battle to improve retention'.
- Employing an appropriate marketing and recruitment strategy – all three stressed the importance of the correct course choice.
- Identifying and helping 'at risk' students – one AD stated that once such students are identified, tutors would be granted 'increased tutorial time' to deal with the more specialised situation presented.
- Motivating staff and making them more aware of the importance of retention to the student and institute.

Table 5.4 Managerial processes to optimise retention

For which strategies should be employed, their replies are summarised in Table 5.5 below.

KEY - Black – Director Blue and Brown – Assistant Directors (ADs)	Rank
Improved ISLA process	14
Good support and careers guidance processes	14
Improved induction process	42
Improved recruitment process	1
Regular monitoring / tracking	33
Tutoring system and one to one support	2
Improved quality teaching	2
Strict adherence to entry requirements	3

Table 5.5 Strategies that should be employed to maximise retention

It can be seen that there is an evenly spread consensus developing in relation to the need for improvements in the quality of the teaching, support / guidance and induction / recruitment processes.

The role of the Course Co-ordinator was viewed by the Director as the “key requirement” in optimising retention. Describing the role as part of a holistic process in delivering quality advice and course information for the lifetime of the course, he states that other skills are used by the co-ordinator. Such skills also include communication, interviewing and general administrative competencies. One of the ADs also used the word ‘key’ when describing the co-ordinator’s contribution to the experience of the student during the whole course, describing the benefits of a ‘familiar face’ during advice sessions and commenting on the importance of quality communication skills in the process. He also mentioned the importance of the tutor in identifying ‘at risk’ students. The other AD described the duties, which are required to be performed efficiently by the Course Co-ordinator as being good target setting and regular tracking, all the time retaining a clear focus on retention.

During the interviews, senior management, who had seen a copy of the Creemers model and were given an explanation of it by this author, agreed broadly that there were similarities between LNIFHE retention policy framework and the model of Creemers. In addition to comments given during the interviews, they outlined their position in a joint statement which is reproduced in appendix 5.4 where it was stated that until recently, the approach of LNIFHE was that the organisation was central and the learner ‘fitted in’ to the processes. Although this written statement did not directly compare the model of Creemers with the approach of LNIFHE, nonetheless, one of the ADs stated in the interview that “Creemers model is generally the same as the approach of LNIFHE but should be widened to include the learner to go alongside quality, opportunity and time – this will make it more student-centred and could form the basis of LNIFHE’s strategy for the foreseeable future”. He also stated that “it is therefore timely to regularly review and consider how effective learning takes place”. However all three senior managers pointed out that in FHE, there is an increasing element of autonomous learning by the student to be considered, as a result the use of the term ‘teaching and learning’ is

replacing the single term 'teaching' in today's parlance. Significantly in the statement, they argued, "The learner needs to be at the centre of what the organisation does and not vice versa". This last statement would represent the espoused policy position which, given the survey analysis is not completely borne out in practice – for example the differing perspectives of all three stakeholders on quality provision and management.

Interpretation and Analysis

Aim 1

Regarding performance indicators, the most prominent retention related PI mentioned was the measure of the number of students completing at the end of a programme compared with those who started. Continuous monitoring of this data was deemed to be very important in measuring how LNIFHE were succeeding in this area. On most of the prominent issues affecting retention, the senior managers spoke almost in unison. For example all three agreed that staff motivation was extremely important in relation to retention when considering the views of teachers. One made the point that it was the 'key factor' in optimising retention, by linking it to good teaching by motivated staff, which in turn motivated the students. It can be seen that motivation is understood to be an important factor influencing retention both in this survey and the literature review where there is clear evidence that this theme is crucial in the battle against poor retention (e.g. Dearing 1996, Martinez 1995, 1997, 1998, 1998a, 2003, Savory 2002, Spours 1997, and McMahon et.al. 2004). Notably, only one of the senior managers mentioned student motivation when asked what factors actually influenced retention. It could be inferred that although they see it as important for staff to be motivated, two of them did not see this as translating through to the students. All the evidence of the literature review points to the opposite conclusion for example "efforts to improve or maintain student motivation can lead to better retention" (Martinez 2001c p. 4). It is also possible that too much attention is given to institute processes and policies instead of being directed to the student, who

should be at the centre of all we do. All senior managers agreed on 'correct course choice', 'good teaching and support' as being three factors that most influenced retention, which is in general concurrence with published research e.g. Martinez (1995). However their responses do not place high importance on the external factors such as *poor prior attainment* highlighted by Beach (2003) and their interrelationship with the internal factors that have been argued to be important by Adamson and McAleavy (2000).

Aim 2

The most interesting reply by the Director that he was not in a position to answer on how the effectiveness of the support processes could be assessed was at odds with one of the ADs who described how this effectiveness is 'evidenced through reports to the regular Tuesday reporting sessions and is acted upon immediately'. However, as discussed earlier, there is in place a policy which dictates that LNIFHE follow the IQ: RS self assessment for effectiveness of these processes. Apart from this, the unity of opinion from these three senior managers was notable.

Aim 3

Quality processes were deemed to be influential also. The most important of these, they report are setting targets, good delivery (i.e. teaching) and the role of the tutor/ISLA. It can be seen that teaching is common to both as are course choice and support, both of which could be considered to be within the domain of the role of the tutor/guidance/ISLA quality process.

Aim 4

Senior management were of a similar opinion over the potential strategies that could be employed to improve retention, mainly agreeing that recruitment, induction and crucially, support should be improved and suggested various improvements in these same processes. Improvements in recruitment and induction procedures have been cited as important by for example Clarke (2001) and McMahon et. al. (2004). Support has been identified by many

authors such as Barwuah et. al. (1997), Martinez (1997), McMahon et. al. (2004) as being crucial in motivating students to complete. Senior management also felt that with modifications, Creemers may be a possibly fruitful model to examine. Generally, these respondents suggested that this model was one to aim at as an ideal.

Tutors - For the interview schedule for this group see appendix 3.4

Aim 1 Performance Indicators

Responding to questions on performance indicators, which they used in the course of their normal work, tutors cited the following features (table 5.6) as being important in regard to retention: -

	Levels			
	1		3	4
Concentration/Work Rate:	1	2 2 2	3	
In course achievement:			3	
Well-planned Lessons:			3	
Motivated Student:	1 1	2		44
Student Attendance:		2		4
Student enjoyment of lessons:	1			
Student dialogue:	1	2	33	4 4
Exam success			3	

Table 5.6 Important Retention Features

It can be seen that motivation, in course achievement and dialogue with students are the most prominent indicators from the perspective of this sample of tutors. When commenting on how these indicators influence teachers' performance, tutors commented that student achievement and motivation could be improved by having more communication with the students. Indeed all mentioned that communication with the individual was *the* key issue. In addition, meeting with the student to establish reasons for poor motivation and action to rectify the problem were regarded as important. All tutors, when dealing with student motivation also used streamlining strategies to suit individual students and reported an element of self-reflection especially when non-achievement was being considered. This seems to concur with the work of Kenwright (1996), who

emphasised the use of agreed targets and tracking progress as positive influences on retention.

Additional external or internal factors perceived by staff to impact on student retention are recorded in table 5.7 below. They were asked to rank the 4 most influential positive and negative student retention.

<u>Positive Factors</u>				
Rank	1	2	3	4
Student Motivation	11			44
Staff Motivation	1	2	3	4
Suitable Course	1	2		
Good rapport	1	2	33	
Attendance		2		
Interest in course		2	3	
Student ability			3	
Success/gaining a qualification	1		3	4
Teaching quality				4
Career Related		2		
Good Support				4

<u>Negative Factors</u>				
Rank	1	2	3	4
Wrong course	11			4
Low confidence	1			
Poor guidance	1	2		
Poor attendance				
Poor motivation	1	2		
Poor group dynamics	1			4
Poor timetabling			3	
Poor achievement		2		
Domestic problems		2	3	
Financial Problems		2	3	
Student ability			3	4
Poor rapport			3	
Teaching quality				4
College demeanour				4
Peer pressure to leave		2	3	4

Table 5.7 Factors perceived by staff to impact on student retention

It can be seen that on the positive side, the three most reported features were good rapport as well as student and staff motivation. Regarding the positive factor of student motivation, tutors reported that students who set their own targets or sought help independently were more successful in their courses. Most staff reported good teacher/student rapport encouraged good exchanges, which enriched the learning environment and was a positive factor in retention. Tutors reported that personally imparting knowledge, which helps students be successful in examinations and gaining employment, motivated both them and the student. Other motivating factors were the viewing of improvement in students due to the good teaching of staff, enthusiasm engendered among students and the

consequent job satisfaction. Motivation as well as the suitability of course choice was cited as both a positive and negative factor by all staff involved in this survey. On the negative factors, this small sample of 6 gave more varied responses with the three most prominent - domestic, financial and peer pressure to leave – note that these are external to the college. This is in concurrence with Yorke (1999) who listed these factors as being of moderate or considerable influence on withdrawal.

Aim 2 Guidance and Support

In the area of guidance and support during induction, at organisational level, most staff answered this question in reasonable detail explaining the criteria and processes that were employed. Most, however, criticised the processes – complaining of poor quality information packs, lack of proper directed time for advice and inappropriate expectations of students by management. At school level, half of the respondents did not answer and the rest mentioned merely that they get a rota and the course coordinator is left to conduct the process. At Course Co-ordinators' level, with the exception of one person, all replied in detail with some overlap from responses at the other two levels. The process is described in detail with all the activities mentioned – e.g. college maps, icebreakers, all types of support offered, booklets etc.

When asked this set of questions on guidance and support for the remainder of the year, the same pattern of reply was noted. With half of the tutors not answering at all at the organisational and school levels, the remainder merely citing ISLAs and meetings with one stating that management should 'provide support when students need it, not when they have left'. Exceptionally, one tutor gave a very detailed reply stating that she knew of and used a wide range of support procedures at both levels.

Regarding the effectiveness of these procedures at induction and throughout the year, only one co-ordinator replied at the organisational level, stating that we merely fulfil our statutory needs

and are not effective at this. Two replied at the school level, stating that there is a good tutorial system coupled with school meetings to discuss issues. At co-ordinators' level all replied, stating that the tutorial system works well at their level and that it was important for the students' progress and achievement, and giving lists of positive points such as the issuance of marketing literature, the ISLAs, monitoring of attendance and punctuality and various support systems. One however stated that her students did not use the system much because of a 'lack of motivation'. On how to improve these procedures, only two answered at co-ordinators' level, citing that we should build up more rapport with students, should monitor attendances more closely and act immediately. These 2 replies have resonance with the work of Beech (2003) who suggested that a telephone call made early in the course reduced withdrawal by 5%. Most of the remaining replies made little distinction in the other two levels, with calls for more time to be given for tutors, less 'panic management', fewer last minute timetable changes, longer induction, simpler language in marketing, more course team meetings in the first 4 weeks to monitor early problems and proper policies to reflect the action required for these.

Aim 3 Quality Control and Assurance

Regarding quality, on the influence of QC and QA processes one person made no answer at all merely shrugging his shoulders, another stated bluntly that he did not understand either term fully. A further tutor did not provide any positive features, stating that on QC 'target setting is wrong' and on QA that the entire IQ: RS system is 'bogus' and management as a result 'do not tackle real issues such as why students are not properly motivated'. Both the other tutors reported on QC that assessment and feedback were the most critical features in that order of rank. The other tutor further stated that on QA individual action plans were helpful. On the negative influences, assessment may induce a fear of failure and cause a drop in motivation. Other QC negative influences were the enrolling of weak students and the amount of paperwork being excessive. On the

management of the QA and QC processes, only one tutor answered my question, stating at the organisational level that ‘these processes are ill thought out and irrelevant’. At the school level, they are ‘handed down by SMT and pushed through’. Finally at co-ordinators’ level, the reply was ‘irrelevant – I do it because I am told to’.

Tutors’ perspectives on factors, chosen from the options of table 5.3(ii), that motivate students are summarised in table 5.8 below.

RANK 1	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5
aabbbbc	aaccdj	bbbaej	cgjjhh	ccfgjh

Table 5.8 Factors motivating students

The prominence of the first two items on curriculum design/ helping students and quality teaching is marked, with 11 responses within the ranks 1-3. Effective tutoring and monitoring/tracking received 6 and 5 replies respectively, spread across ranks 2-5. Some further comments were the allowance of realistic time to be taught and the introduction of financial support such as the EMA (Educational Maintenance Allowance).

Only one tutor did not reply to the question involving strategies used by LNIFHE to maximise retention. Contributions included, the use of EMA, tutorial system including the ISLA, improved induction processes, monitoring attendances, the new ‘at risk’ register, school meetings and zero tolerance policy towards absenteeism. All agreed that there was too much form filling for students at the start of each year, with unnecessary duplication. Three of the tutors ventured criticism, stating that the ISLA and follow up procedures were almost useless in relation to retention and must be improved. Three tutors called for better follow up procedures and more independent interviews to be given at induction to place students on correct courses. Better information and recruitment with integrity received the other top rankings, with 1 each. Other features mentioned by respondents were, regular feedback, better tracking processes with follow up, improved use of ISLA and the need for a system to allow early switching between courses. On targeting during the ISLA

process, two did not answer, one said that this took place 'sometimes' with no elaboration, and the other tutors stated that they used attendance and work improvement targets coupled with the units within their programmes which act as milestones to be achieved en route through the course. Their inclination was towards broad targets rather than statistical targets, which they perceived as being of limited use.

All tutors supplied their opinion on induction with 5 of them stating that more time must be given to this critically important process. One tutor described her role as one of the provider of a welcoming environment, detailed information on the course, support facilities and rapport within the group. She suggested that a full 4-week programme of taster sessions for courses and thorough diagnostic testing procedures be introduced. Three other tutors suggested that a longer induction period would better inform students and allow identification of early 'at risk' factors.

Slightly differing accounts of when action begins after absence were given. Two acted after 1 day if a reason was not provided on the day, another two stated that they acted after 2 days' absence and one, after 4 days. One tutor did not specify the number of days. Various strategies were employed from communicating with student or if appropriate, parents by letter and verbally, emailing other tutors, and heads of schools, using registers to establish patterns and invoking the disciplinary policy.

Aim 4 Strategies for Improvement

Only two tutors ventured an opinion on the management and improvement of retention generally and, to summarise, they stated that this is a complex problem that will only be solved by both producing a policy and taking firm action to enforce it. More professional expertise should be employed and the problem be removed from lecturing staff. When pressed on what specifically could be done to improve retention, two made no reply. The other

four mentioned early 'at risk' identification and associated follow up, ranking this 1, 2, 2, and 4 respectively.

The tutors were surveyed on the applicability of Creemers model to optimise retention. Two stated that they did not fully follow the logic of it at all levels, but all agreed that the consistent application of quality, opportunity and time at all levels ought to be performed. One stated that at least at student level, such application "was fundamentally a necessity for student morale, motivation and retention". Some stated that time frames in FHE do not quite suit the model of Creemers which was designed with reference to schools – in FHE time scales have to become much more flexible and malleable in order to engage with and successfully support students to the end of their chosen programmes of study. The time dimension may be extended in cases where students cannot learn or perform to a satisfactory level within traditional time allocation – some may leave the college for several years while others may temporarily opt out of a course for genuine reasons. One tutor also stated "time for lessons are gradually reducing to save money, which cannot be regarded as conducive to providing quality learning" This situation is a notable divergence from Creemers and must be accommodated to reflect the different type of learning, which takes place in modern FHE. All thought that opportunity was "obviously" essential for success.

The survey data suggested that although tutors felt that in relation to retention, the dimensions of opportunity and time and quality had not yet been applied fully to their everyday experience, and to some policies such as the tutorial or 'at risk' policy, nevertheless, the framework of Creemers was "potentially a good thing". In the words of one tutor, "today's student should be at the centre of our attention and receive quality at all levels and at all times in college" and another stated that "opportunity and time are limited, quality does not permeate all levels yet". Another tutor stated that idealism is often overshadowed by pragmatism – material and human resources are

always limited – and so, achieving the maximum effectiveness and quality of outcomes are ideals to which we all strive.

Interpretation and Analysis

Aim 1

This phase of questioning revealed the depth of feeling that tutors have on the subject of staff morale and motivation. On the main factors affecting student retention, one tutor suggested that motivation was important as “motivated staff will take a more holistic interest in their students, build rapport, support and encourage them, all of which will have a positive effect on learners and optimise retention”. Another tutor’s analysis was similar although he took a less positive tack, stating that less motivated staff tend to give lessons of lower quality which has a negative effect on student retention. Overall they felt that LNIFHE management should value staff and students, with one tutor continuing “...and concentrate more on the feelings of the staff”, which resonated with the work of Owen and Davies (2003) as well as Spours (1997). The sample of tutors also reported that the 3 most prominent negative factors which influenced retention were external to LNIFHE – this concurs generally with Palmer (2004) who firmly stated that such factors generally are more influential than the internal ones. It should be noted that the positive factors tend to be of an internal nature, clustering around support and motivation, which are thought of as important factors in relation to retention.

Aim 2

Staff appeared confused when trying to interpret the school and organisational levels of support and guidance at induction, sometimes criticising college processes and in two cases not answering at all. Not surprisingly, as this group were tutors and co-ordinators, at course coordinators’ level, a lot of detail on the process was forwarded and less criticism ventured. A similar pattern of replies was noted for the questions concerning the effectiveness of support and guidance procedures during the remainder of the year.

One gave very detailed comments, two fairly detailed and the remainder patchy. Little distinction was made between what actually happens and what is meant to happen at these levels. This finding is suggestive of a lack of knowledge about policy and processes at these levels in the organisation, an unwillingness to want to know possibly due to lack of motivation or both. This finding appears to show another implementation gap and resonates with the less than enthusiastic replies concerning the monitoring, appraisal and target setting processes.

It was interesting to note that in the 'effectiveness of the support systems' replies, staff reported that they were watching for items which Martinez (1995, 2000), Laglee (1997) and McMahon et.al. (2004) had cited as 'at risk' factors – such as the incorrect course, poor previous attainment or requiring additional support. All tutors had strong opinions on the importance of induction as a key factor in retention. In addition, all ventured opinion on their separate strategies for dealing with attendance problems, which clearly showed that they were committed to their courses and students. Several tutors also mentioned the importance of effective tutoring, guidance and tracking processes in retaining students. Clearly these tutors believe that student support were very important for retention. Two out of the six tutors, when asked the question on ISLA target setting stated that they did not use targets for this process apart from retrospectively reviewing how a student has progressed at two points during the college year. This is an unexpected reply given that the ISLA form is designed to encourage a student to achieve targets during their time on the course. One of these tutors viewed the target setting process as "more paperwork to be completed" having complained that he was already overburdened with this type of work, the other did not elaborate. It is also possible that the 2 tutors were not au fait with the term or perhaps not informed of the more modern approach to tutoring where target setting is becoming increasingly important. It is LNIFHE policy for all tutors to implement and monitor targets and as this is clearly not being completely performed

uniformly by all tutors, it can be construed as another example of an implementation gap.

Aim 3

The analysis of quality control and assurance was interesting as it showed up both a lack of knowledge and unwillingness to grasp the related quality management processes. A clear negative attitude towards the input of management into these systems developed strongly here as can be seen from some of the quotes in the section dealing with aim 3 in the report on tutors' opinion above. This shows again the existence of an implementation gap in the whole area of quality management. On motivating students, a glance at table 5.8 above shows that curriculum design, support for students and quality teaching were deemed to be easily the most important features.

Aim 4

The two replies from tutors on the management and improvement of retention generally stressed that it was a complex problem for management to solve. However, four mentioned early 'at risk' identification and associated follow up as being important. When specifically questioned on Creemers, some more comment on strategy for improvement was given. Tutors suggest that Creemers is applicable to policy intentions but not borne out in practice from the perspectives of all stakeholders, including senior managers. It appears that there is an implementation gap in a number of areas between what happens and what should happen. This phenomenon and how to deal with it has been researched and reported on by Gross et. al. (1971) and Fullan (1999, 2001). Both authors report that reducing complexity and increasing clarity through better communication with staff will reduce implementation gaps. The majority of them expressed limited opinion, with a minority, the quality and student support managers enthusiastically stating that it was an 'excellent idea' and that it 'looks promising'.

Students - Report on the Questionnaire to the 6 selected classes

(- For the questionnaire details see appendix 3.2)

Although a high percentage of students - 69 out of 71, returned the questionnaires, some of them did not complete all of the survey. The figures, diagrams and graphs giving survey results can be found in appendices 5.1 and 5.2. The sizes of the samples from the 6 schools - 61.4% of which were full time, (38.6% part – time) ranged from 13.1% to 18.8% of the total. Of the respondents, 90% were in the 16-19-age range. The gender split was almost precisely 50/50 overall and the 6 withdrawn students – all male, participated.

Aim 1 Factors Affecting Retention

All students answered the first two questions completely. When asked the reasons for attending college, 75.7% and 24.3% responded progress to HE and work related respectively. When questioned about which factors helped or hindered attendance, surprisingly few students stated that financial considerations gave them difficulty - this is in line with the students surveyed in the initial report (IR) for this thesis where only 15% cited this reason and could be as a result of the EMA, discussed below. This casts doubt on the view that the external reasons are more influential as reported by Palmer (2004). The bar chart of the results, which can be seen in appendix 5.2 – question 4 actually shows a slight positive skew towards finance being helpful. A similar picture can be seen for the 'personal' section worth another slight positive skew.

A much stronger positive skew is seen in the 'support' factors leading to the clear inference that this is one of the strongest influences in retaining students, this is in close agreement with the IR results and the work of Martinez (1996, 1997 as well as the Scottish Office 1999a). A similar strongly positive skew towards 'helpful' appears in answer to the organisational factors, which contributed to student attendance. This clearly indicates that the majority, 55% were happy, with only 14.6% unhappy about such factors as timetabling and suitable rooms etc.

The 'other factors', section was poorly answered but those respondents who did reply reported strong leaning towards 'helped', 66.7% and only 14.6% unhappy. The factors which were helpful were friendliness of staff, caring tutor and good teachers – made mostly by females the few unhelpful comments tended to concern being on the wrong course or the course being too hard, mostly stated by males. A very frequent positive comment was on the educational maintenance allowance, which a significant number of students, 21 were receiving. Another positive comment was that a bond was formed with new friends made in FHE. The importance of excellent teaching received widespread comment also among both the current and withdrawn students - this is consistent with the findings of Martinez (1995) and DfEE (1997): both reports stated that this was a positive contributory factor in the retention of students.

Of the unhappy comments, the most prominent was that the students had to work a lot of part time hours, which made study very difficult. This concurs with the work of McCoy and Smyth (2005) who found that up to 60% of students take a part time job and that a significant number are not retained especially if they work more than 15 hours a week. A restricted bus timetable in this rural area was another problematical situation that received comment. This is also one of the early 'at risk' warning signs as has been reported by Martinez and Munday (1998).

Aim 2 Guidance and Support

All the interviewees answered the induction section, with strong emphasis on both the very good nature of the advice, which placed them in their programme, and the content of that course. Other research studies, for example, the FE Staff College, (1994) have found that students find that such advice at induction was an important factor in keeping them on a course. Some however replied that they had received no advice on course choice. This type of reply was also found in the IR and can perhaps be explained as probably a group of students who knew exactly what programme they wanted to do, simply enrolled for it and did not request any advice on the

course. Although 50% were satisfied with careers advice, the others were not as happy and 24.3% reported no careers advice at all. Again, perhaps this latter group planned to proceed to HE and did not seek or need career advice. A slight negative skew on the bar chart was noted in the timetable advice, indicating general satisfaction in this area.

For financial support, the picture was less clear-cut with an even spread of replies, leaning slightly towards the good/excellent positions. It is possible that some of these students were sponsored by employers. A relatively large percentage (11.8%) reported no advice was offered at induction on financial support. There is no way of knowing whether they requested such advice. Study support was similar with a slightly stronger leaning (54.7%) towards the good/excellent replies end of the scale. Again a significant group (7.4%), who were all male, reported receiving no advice about the study support facilities on offer. No replies were given in the 'other section'.

Of the total number of respondents (69) in the survey, 90% answered the question on whether they had chosen the correct course and of these, 85.7% replied yes. This concurs with similar levels of satisfaction about course choice/content noted above, and demonstrates consistency in the students' replies. There were 8.6% who gave further comments, with many praising the excellence in teaching although these comments tended to be clustered around 3 courses, a situation almost identical to what was found in the IR.

Regarding the question asking whether they had received added support to assist studies, there was a total response rate of 92.9% with 40.0% replying in the affirmative and 52.9% in the negative. The large negative percentage can be partially explained by the fact that the students involved may not have needed such support. The following question on precisely which areas of support were helpful or otherwise yielded a result of general satisfaction in the areas of communication, basic skills and numeracy with a more evenly spread reply for ICT. As can be seen in the results summary below,

not many replied to this question: the total of 56 responses precludes some who reported more than one type of support. On the quality of teaching, 94.2 % replied, with 81.4% good or excellent.

To summarise from the reply to the motivating factors above, it can be seen that in those sections where there is a significant number of replies, the largest were good teaching (40.4% rank 1) and good college atmosphere (50% rank 1). These factors also had the largest number of respondents (47 and 38) giving them a rank of some value. On the other end of the scale, parental involvement, disciplinary processes and the ISLA process received 0, 7 and 9 replies only. The relatively low number of students citing the ISLA as being motivational could be because either they see it as a paper exercise or the tutors may not be applying the process enthusiastically or uniformly – if so, this could be described as another possible implementation gap.

Only 12.9% answered the question on what LNIFHE can do to improve student support and guidance. One stated that the processes had no effect on her motivation, as she already possessed it. Another requested help to achieve his agreed targets. One complained that she was not given enough information. Three stated that information showing whom to go to and where should be provided to students. Also the comment that tutorial contact times should be twice a week was offered without further justification. For the 'any other comments' section, 40% of students responded. Their replies are summarised in table 5.9 below. A small number, 4 replied that the only reason for them being on their course was that their preferred programme was stopped due to small numbers enrolling.

EMA helped.	Better advice needed
Part time work interfered with study time (3 replies).	More space and cheaper materials from learning centre (2 replies).
Money problems (3 replies).	College atmosphere or ethos not attractive (6 replies).
Bus timetables were not suitable (3 replies).	ISLA forms should be checked to ensure targets are met (2 replies).
College timetables not attractive (3 replies).	Timetable of support staff should be known (2 replies).
Course content not properly explained.	
Excellent teaching (6 replies).	
Poor teaching (5 replies).	

Table 5.9 Comments on Support and Guidance

Aim 3 Quality Control and Assurance

Almost 96% replied to the question involving frequency of tutorial contact with 43% stating weekly and 24% replying ‘Termly’. A small proportion (5.8%) replied either yearly or half yearly, clearly showing a misunderstanding of this contact or suggesting the possibility that tutors were not maintaining frequent contact with them. It is stated policy at LNIFHE that tutors have weekly contact with their tutor-group and be available at all reasonable times for consultation. In the ‘other’ section quite a few replies stated that they could see their tutor at anytime at all on a one to one basis. Regarding their discussions with tutors, on the usefulness of the advice/feedback received the students’ replies were positive, with 63% stating good or excellent ‘satisfaction’ with only 10% not satisfied. The total response for this question was 87.8%.

The question on how useful the ISLA process is in achieving targets was answered by 74.3%, with 20% giving good or excellent responses, 25.7% average to good and a further 28.6 % replied in the negative. The question on how useful the ISLA process is in helping students to succeed was also answered by 74.3% with broadly similar figures, 17.2% stating good or excellent, 24.3% average and 32.9% with a more negative reply. Male and female

opinions were evenly split in the area of quality. The negative replies to these 2 ISLA questions, 28.6% and 32.9% show that a significant percentage of students are not benefiting from this quality process and is a disparity with institute policy.

Report on the interview of the 24 current and 6 withdrawn students

(For the interview schedule for this group see appendix 3.3. The current students are represented by the 2 best and 2 worst attendees from each of the 6 selected classes. Of the 24 current students 14 were female).

Aim 1 Factors Affecting Retention

Various reasons for attending college were given by the students, which reflected their differing perspectives. Students from the two 'A' level schools commented that they enrolled to get their exams and go to university. The better attendees' replies looked forward to university with the others stating that they had a better chance to achieve this in FHE than at school. One stated that 'the independence of study encouraged by the environment of FE will provide a good translation into higher education' whereas another merely wanted to return to FHE for 'something to focus on'. All other respondents stated that their career path dictated their presence here. Some mentioned the reputation of good teaching in particular areas, others stressed the independence of approach to study, which is demanded by the institute. On ranking factors that affected attendance, students' replies can be found in table 5.10(i) for current and 5.10(ii) for withdrawn students below. It should be noted that not all students filled the 4 boxes completely

Positive Factors				
Rank	1	2	3	4
Student motivation or enjoyment	111	22	33	4
Suitable course		2		
Hours of attendance		2		
Proximity to home	1	2	333	4
Interest in course	11	2	3	4
With friends	1	2	3	
Gaining a qualification	11111	222	33	44
Teaching quality	11	22		
EMA allowance	11	222		
College atmosphere		2	33333	4
Career related	11111	22	3	
Good support	1		3	44
Supportive family				4
Interesting approach of teacher	1	2	3	

Negative Factors				
Rank	1	2	3	4
Wrong course				4
Health reasons	11	22	3	
Poor motivation	1			
Poor timetabling	1	2	3	
Domestic problems	1			
Personal problems	11			
College atmosphere/ethos	111	22		
Peer pressure to leave	1		3	
Distance to college	11	222		4
Poor discipline	1			

Table 5.10(i) Factors that affected attendance (current students)

From the replies of current students in table 5.10(i), it can be seen that the three most prominent positive replies were gaining a qualification, career related and student motivation respectively. On the negative side, the most prominent are College atmosphere/ethos, distance to college and health reasons respectively. The latter two reasons were particularly prominent among the poorer attendees and suggest a link between a student with health problems, the distance which he/she must travel to college and poor attendance.

Positive Factors				
Rank	1	2	3	4
Student motivation or enjoyment		22		
Suitable course				
Hours of attendance				
Proximity to home	1			4
Interest in course				
With friends				
Gaining a qualification	1		3	4
Teaching quality	1	2		
EMA allowance	11	2	33	
College atmosphere		2	3	4
Career related	1	2	3	
Good support			3	44
Supportive family				4
Interesting approach of teacher				

Negative Factors				
Rank	1	2	3	4
Wrong course	11	2	3	4
Health reasons				
Poor motivation	1	2	3	4
Poor teaching		22	3	4
Domestic problems	1			
Personal problems	1			
College atmosphere/ethos	1	22	3	4
Peer pressure to leave				
Distance to college				4
Poor discipline				
Financial problems			3	4

Table 5.10(ii) Factors that affected attendance (withdrawn students)

As can be seen from table 5.10(ii), the three most noted factors contributing to the small sample of withdrawn students' reasons for poor attendance and ultimately incompleteness were 'wrong course, college atmosphere/ethos and poor quality of teaching' – these findings are closely in line with Martinez (1995) and, in the case of demeanour, Barwuah (1997). The two students who cited domestic and personal problems also stated that they had got jobs, would not be enrolling for a course for the foreseeable future and when pressed, commented that they were only using their 'free' time usefully by studying in the course, from which they have now withdrawn, while they were unemployed and seeking work. This could be interpreted as two cases of the 'opportunist' student (Page 1998) who only enrolled in FHE to usefully pass time before leaving for employment. This scenario runs contrary to the managerialist approach which makes the assumption that all students intend to complete. It is also notable that no form of support or guidance was mentioned, despite the fact that the overwhelming body of research in the literature review has found this to be crucial to student retention. The 'positive factor' replies were more evenly spread with the most frequent replies being career, gaining a qualification and the EMA allowance, the latter suggesting that a monetary based motivation to stay on a course exists. It will also be noticed that motivation is mentioned in both the positive and negative sides of the 'withdrawn students' table.

Aim 2 Guidance and Support

On the usefulness of advice and guidance received during induction, students' replies are summarised in table 5.11 (i) and (ii) below.

Views expressed in response to this question were positive and mostly reflected satisfaction with the factors in the tables are in agreement with a survey completed by the Department of Education and Employment DfEE, (1997) which found that the level of student satisfaction generally was the variable linked most strongly with completion. The better attendees in each class were more

forthcoming than the poor attendees. One student declared that he missed the induction process due to being a late starter.

The withdrawn 6 students gave their most comprehensive replies to the EMA i.e. finance and 'wrong course' with 5 out of six responding here. Initially one might be drawn to the conclusion that better advice at enrolment is needed but the predominance of the importance of EMA funding is perhaps suggestive that these particular students were not as serious or motivated to a commitment to study. In stark contrast the current students praised the advice which they received in choosing courses.

Overall, the vast majority of the current respondents were positive in their replies. The more negative of these answers were made sporadically by only around 4 out of the 24 replies (16.67%).

Factor	Summary of comments
a) Choice of course	Replies varied from 'mind made up before enrolment' to 'lecturers were helpful'.
b) Content of course	Fully explained, enjoyable, (very) useful
c) Careers advice	Very useful, little, poor, none
d) Timetable	Good, very useful, understood
e) Financial support/advice	Good, very useful EMA advice - several comments here, awareness of this advice could be better, all income and expenses explained, not very, none.
f) Study/ learning support	Good, satisfactory, 'needs to be advertised more', could be better
g) Knowing where to go or who to go to for help.	Good, guided tour of building, fine, not so good
h) Others	'I changed course after 1 day partly because of initial advice being poor and partially because of the atmosphere experienced during a sampler course on the second day'.

Table 5.11(i) Advice and guidance received during induction (current students)

Factor	Summary of comments
i) (Wrong) Choice of course	5 out of 6 mentioned this to be a contributory factor in their decision to leave
j) Content of course	'ok' 'good', 'fine' were the terse replies
k) Careers advice	Useful, little, poor, none
l) Timetable	No complaints
m) Financial support/advice	Good, useful EMA advice (several comments here), all income and expenses explained.
n) Study/ learning support	Good, satisfactory
o) Knowing where to go or who to go to for help.	Good, guided tour of building, fine, none (late starter)
p) Others	No comments given

**Table 5.11(ii) Advice and guidance received during induction
(withdrawn students)**

On the usefulness/ effectiveness of the support and guidance received during the year, the students' replies are summarised together with the frequency of the comment in table 5.12(i) and (ii) below - not all students commented on all sections.

Factor	Summary of comments
a) Learning support	None 2, N/A 5, effective 3, good 8, OK 2 Available if required (total 21).
b) Careers / advice	None 6, N/A 5, very good 1, good 6, OK 2, not useful, 1 effective for keeping me focused, 1 (total 22).
c) Financial advice	None 4, not needed 7, useful 3 good 5, OK 2, important 2, not useful 1 (total 24).
d) Contact with your tutor	Very helpful 5, effective 1, useful 3, good 11, OK 2, good for discussing progress 2 (total 24)
e) Other	None 23. Assignment feedback - good

**Table 5.12(i) Usefulness/effectiveness of support and guidance
(current students)**

Factor	Summary of comments
a) Learning support	None 2, N/A 2, OK 2
b) Careers / advice	None 4, OK 2,
c) Financial advice	None 1 good 5
d) Contact with your tutor	Very helpful 1, good 3, OK 2
e) Other	None 6

**Table 5.12(ii) Usefulness/effectiveness of support and guidance
(withdrawn students)**

For the current students, it can be seen that most (13 out of 21) felt that learning support was effective with all students praising the usefulness of advice given during tutor contact (24 out of 24). On both careers and financial advice, the students split evenly on the effectiveness of advice received. Only one student made a comment in the 'other' section, praising feedback. In contrast quite a high percentage of the withdrawn students were generally negative in their replies except for the financial advice – almost certainly referring to the EMA advice. This recurring reference to financial support/EMA allowance has some resonance with Callender (1999) who surveyed 1000 withdrawn students nationally and identified that 25% of them consider withdrawing due to financial reasons, although the sample of 6 in this case is much too small to allow definitive inferences to be made. However 6 out of 75, the total population of the 6 surveyed classes is 8% and as the first year had still 4/5 months left at the time of the interviews, it could be argued that 8% is consistent with Callender's results which stated that 25% 'considered' withdrawing.

On how influential the quality of teaching in the course programme was in keeping you on the course, the replies in tables 5.13(i), (ii) are summarised below.

RANK 1 (Helped a lot)	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5 (Repelled me)
17	4	2	0	1

Table 5.13(i) Influence of the quality of teaching (current students)

RANK 1 (Helped a lot)	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5 (Repelled me)
1	1	0	3	1

Table 5.13(ii) Influence of the quality of teaching (withdrawn students)

As can be seen from the current students, 21 out of 24 felt strongly that the quality of teaching was very influential in retaining them on the course. This high level of satisfaction for quality of teaching and learning among this small sample of current students agrees with a finding by Martinez (p. 12, 1995) which states that 'current students rated good, helpful and qualified teachers' as one of the main factors influencing their continued attendance. The withdrawn students had more negative opinion of the influence, again consistent with Martinez (1995).

For the actual quality of teaching received, students gave these responses in tables 5.14(i) and (ii): -

RANK 1 (worst)	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5 (best)
0	0	0	10	12

Table 5.14(i) Quality of teaching (current students)

RANK 1 (worst)	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5 (best)
2	1	1	1	1

Table 5.14(ii) Quality of teaching (withdrawn students)

It can be seen that a very high proportion (22 out of 24) of current students ranked teaching quality at either 4 or 5 which was in direct contrast with the more scattered replies of the withdrawn students.

Aim 3 Quality Control and Assurance

Views on how useful the students found the ISLA process are summarised in tables 5.15 (i) and (ii): -

RANK 1 (worst)	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5 (best)
3	1	6	4	2

Table 5.15(i) Usefulness of the ISLA process (current students)

RANK 1 (worst)	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5 (best)
2	1	3	0	0

Table 5.15(ii) Usefulness of the ISLA process (withdrawn students)

Four current students were not aware that 'an ISLA process was being followed', two 'didn't see the point of it', and another praised the process. Clearly there is confusion with this important quality process. The withdrawn students were more negative and 2 did not recall using an ISLA form at all. This confusion was precisely what was found in the Initial Study. It is possible that this is a reflection of differences in ways ISLA was used by their tutors. This is another example of the mismatch between both the perspectives of the stakeholders and policy and practice in the important area of quality management. It resonates with the findings of the questionnaire, answered by a high proportion of the 6 classes, where 28.6% and 32.9% were not benefiting from this quality process.

Table 5.16 summarises what the students felt motivated them to stay at the college – in the case of withdrawn students, while they were still at college.

Motivating Factors	Current	Withdrawn
Good teaching	7	2
Good Friends	3	
Nice environment	4	1
Success in course/ gaining qualification	14	
Enjoy learning	1	
Progress to university	4	
Career prospect	6	1
Achieving my goals	2	
Like chosen course	2	
Support from home	1	
Proximity to home	1	
Suitable timetable	1	
EMA grant	3	3
Support from tutor	2	

Table 5.16 Motivating factors for current and withdrawn students

Clearly the main reason for current students remaining is the prospect of success in their courses and gaining a qualification. Good teaching and career prospects were 2nd and 3rd with the rest a long

way behind. Half of the withdrawn students cited the EMA allowance and 2 others also stated good teaching with 1 forwarding career prospects as a reason to complete. Other comments yielded few replies; these are summarised in tables 5.17(i) and (ii) below: -

Comment	Frequency
Supply a quiet study area	3
Ensure healthier food available	1
Must improve condition of books in library	1
Some unhelpful teachers	1
Very helpful tutor	2
Computers were not available during 'free time'	2
Timetable not good	1
Teaching very good	1
Supply a better socialising area	2
Have less free time and reduce temptation to go home	1

Table 5.17(i) Other comments (current students)

Comment	Frequency
Unhelpful teachers	2
Very helpful tutor	2
Teaching very good	2

Table 5.17(ii) Other comments (withdrawn students)

Interpretation and Analysis

Aim 1

Replies for current students were consistent with the findings of other authors notably Martinez (2003) and Medway and Pennay (1994) who report tutor contact as being a very important factor in motivating learners and influential to completion of courses.

Regarding financial factors and retention, in the survey these factors appeared to have little significance among current students- this does not quite concur with the work of the Scottish Office (1999a), which suggests that financial guidance is an important factor in the retention of students. However, some students replied that these factors were helpful and others that they were not - an apparent discrepancy. Two possible reasons for this appear obvious: - that some current students are receiving the EMA allowance which they are happy with

and others, who are not receiving this allowance and are working part time with some of them finding it difficult to perform both work and study. The new EMA allowance has been introduced this year 2004-2005, pre data collection and appears to have lessened the importance of the negative impact of the financial feature. This is supported by the very small sample of 6 withdrawn students, half of whom stated that the EMA allowance was a factor which encouraged them to remain on course. The EMA allowance seems to be a factor which retards the tendency towards withdrawal among students at LNIFHE. The tutors also stated that the EMA had helped with the problem of student retention. Other socio economic status factors may well be influential in this particular catchment area – this is reflected in the position of the Downpatrick area as being high on the Noble Indices (2005) and is a topic that needs further research. The prominence given to the importance of a local bus timetable being synchronised with current students' course timetables was unexpected and reminiscent of the call by Martinez (1996) for action research to be instigated to accurately utilise college data, which would involve student feedback. This is similar to the findings of Ishikawa (1985) who stated the importance of knowing customers' needs. This is a timely warning that wherever possible, we should adopt a student centred approach towards timetabling and accommodate them where possible.

Aim 2

Overall the students were pleased with the various support and guidance processes both at induction and during the year with the withdrawn students giving slightly more negative comments, reflecting their dissatisfaction with aspects of the guidance processes. In particular, 5 out of 6 of the withdrawn students cited that being on the wrong course was partially responsible for their subsequent withdrawal and linked this to advice received at enrolment. Two of Martinez's (1996, 1997) 6 elements for a successful retention strategy, appropriate sorting at induction as well as good advice and guidance, both of which are espoused to by the

policies LNIFHE were not evident from the perspectives of this latter group of students.

Aim 3

On the quality processes, the students would only be aware of these when considering tutor support and the ISLA process. The withdrawn students tended to have a more negative opinion of the process with 2 not recalling seeing such a form. These two suggested that the course had started before their enrolment. An improved induction procedure could have 'captured' these students and perhaps prevented withdrawal. This survey of 6 students was too small to make statistical comparisons however, it is interesting to note that in the publication of Yorke (1999) who analysed withdrawn students, 24% of those who were full time students also criticised quality processes. All of the students involved in this survey were full time and a slight majority of the 16 current students who replied praised this process although the relatively even spread of opinion, which was also borne out by the questionnaire data, suggests that the application of the ISLA by each individual tutor could be an issue. There appears to be another example of the implementation gap between policy and practice relating to quality processes. It is therefore important that LNIFHE establishes best practice and standardises the procedure.

General Summary of the Survey Findings

Apart from slightly more females responding to the caring and friendliness of staff features, there were no major gender differences to report. This slight difference may even be explained as insignificant, as there was a female to male ratio of the current student sample of 14:10.

Aim 1 Performance Indicators

With respect to research questions 1.1 and 1.2, senior management were the most informative stakeholder concerning the question of performance indicators. Their replies referred to a mixture of internal and external targets, the close and regular monitoring of which influenced policy. The tutors' replies entirely concentrated on those factors which occurred daily such as student attendance, motivation and general issues concerned with the classroom. The clear conclusion to be drawn is that staff adhere to their own PIs and generally do not adhere to or possibly even have knowledge of the LNIFHE college development plan's PIs, which are created, monitored and reflected upon by senior management. It was not surprising that the two groups answered in these apparently mutually exclusive ways, as they were reflecting on the PIs met in their everyday experience. This is another example of a gap between the perspectives of these two stakeholders.

However in contrast, the tutors and senior managers agreed on student achievement and success as being important performance indicators. The fact that these indicators were cited by both the management and tutors is not surprising given that they occur in the experiences of both groups – the managers who seek funding which is partly based on achievement and the tutors who daily see and enjoy student achievement whilst progressing through their course and success at the examination at the end of the year. This commonality was indicative of the existence of both financial drivers and a student centred view shared by both groups.

The replies to influences and impacts of PIs resulted in a consensus within the tutors, agreeing on communication and reflection as being key deliberative processes. It was interesting that tutors actually mentioned these deliberative processes whereas senior management, who clearly must use these same processes in their monitoring, planning and other managerial functions, did not. It should be remembered that tutors were asked about the influence of

PIs on their performance whereas managers were asked how the PIs, which they used were influential on policy.

Factors Affecting Retention

Research question 1.3 was addressed by the responses of all three stakeholders, which showed some variation as could be expected, given their different daily experiences. Senior management cited the three important areas (see table 5.1) of correct course placement, good teaching and quality support, tutors stated good rapport as well as staff and student motivation – which can be seen in table 5.7, with students citing gaining a qualification, motivation and career related factors in that order (table 5.10). Withdrawn students tended to state that motivation, being on the wrong course and college atmosphere as being negative influences. One can see that motivation is a common theme for all the stakeholders.

An unexpected finding can be viewed from the tutors' replies to the question involving factors affecting retention as only one of them mentioned teaching quality as being important and then just gave it a rank of 4! The research in the literature review suggests that this factor is important for students in deciding to complete their course – for example the Staff College (1994). The reason for the respondents' failure to mention teaching quality as a major factor affecting retention could be that they see themselves as good teachers, assume that their teaching is also good and do not connect it directly with retention.

Tutors' responses to item b), 'quality teaching', in table 5.3(ii) where all 6 replied that this item was ranked 1 to 3 in importance, strongly indicates that tutors feel this factor is important in *motivating* students. However both current and a third of withdrawn students in their answers and 'other' comments concurred with other published research for example the Staff College (1994), Martinez and Munday (1998) and emphasised the importance of quality teaching for them to remain on their courses. The inference, which can be drawn from this discussion, is that high quality teaching is important in motivating

students and subsequently retaining them. Personal motivation is a key intermediate factor for a student in deciding whether or not to stay on a course.

Positive staff motivation was less in evidence when tutors answered questions concerning duties given by management such as doing paperwork to complete quality procedures. These rather negative attitudes seem to originate from the perception of bureaucratic managerial demands of them which is reminiscent of the findings of Somekh et. al (1999) and Randle and Brady (1997). Regarding motivation, both senior staff and tutors felt that it was important for tutors to feel valued by management. However, senior management felt comfortable with their efforts in this regard whereas one tutor stated that management should “concentrate more on the feelings of staff”. This is a clear difference in perspective of these stakeholders. The staff and students’ replies to the positive factors which influence retention question almost all referred to internal factors affecting retention which is at odds with authors such as Palmer (2004 p. 147) who argued that the influence of external factors outweigh the internal ones by a ratio of 4 : 1. To add to this discrepancy, Martinez (1995) reports that staff view reasons for early withdrawal as being largely external whereas students see the problem as stemming from largely internal college based factors. When the negative factors from tables 5.7 and 5.10 (i) and (ii) are analysed, staff generally replied that external reasons were influential on retention. The students, both current and withdrawn, were more varied with their responses, exhibiting an even spread of external and internal factors. Both sets highlighted college atmosphere and ethos as being a negative influence on them with most of the withdrawn students emphasising the wrong choice of course as being problematical. It could be therefore be suggested that both sets of factors, internal and external need to be ‘satisfied’ simultaneously for each student in order to maximise their chances of remaining on course.

Aim 2 Guidance and Support

With reference to research questions 2.4 and 2.5, the management and stakeholders' views of the support and guidance mechanisms, all three stakeholders cited these areas as being important to varying degrees repeatedly in their replies. This was also found to be an important influential factor for retention in the literature review by authors Burwuah (1997), Hughes (1995), Martinez (1996), (1997) as well as Gutteridge and Compton (1998).

The senior staff answered the guidance and support questions at organisational / school levels with a thorough description of the processes involved. They appreciated the pivotal importance of the Course Co-ordinator, who managed the support process through application of the tutorial system and feed up through the head of schools to senior management. Only half of the tutors ventured an answer at these levels with most criticising the processes, complaining that they get a rota and are expected to get on with the job - which they agree is a very important one - without sufficient time allocation for either course co-ordination or tutorial support and with unrealistic expectations of the students by senior management. In contrast, all tutors replied stating that the tutorial system was important and works well at their level. The students generally were also satisfied with the support processes and appreciated why it was important. This has resonance with the work of Martinez (1995) who also found that withdrawn students appreciated the importance of support and guidance mechanisms.

Again, it is obvious that a major discrepancy in stakeholders' opinion exists in this area. The senior staff theorise about the correct processes to be employed but clearly need to appreciate that other staff do not necessarily understand or apply them uniformly. It would be desirable for both groups to understand each other's perspective; otherwise the student will potentially suffer a loss in the quality of provision. The latter point is mitigated by the agreement between students and tutors that the support process seems to function reasonably well at student / tutor level, despite the discrepancy

described above. There appears to be a convergence in espoused policy and practice in the area of support and guidance generally.

Aim 3 Quality Control and Assurance

With reference to research questions 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8, which quality related features are influential on retention, the management of and stakeholders' views of the effectiveness of quality assurance and control systems, the three stakeholders had varying opinions of these systems. The survey found that there were discrepancies in opinion between the three stakeholders with regard to the quality systems and in the case of some of the students the quality of teaching and ISLA process. Generally, the senior managers felt that setting targets and monitoring the proper implementation of the ISLAs were of prime importance. Two tutors generally agreed with this by stating that assessment, feedback and the application of individual action plans were important. However 3 of the other 4 tutors were much more negative with one stating that the entire IQ: RS system is 'bogus' another, 'management do not tackle real issues such as why students are not properly motivated'. The other tutor did not even comment in this area of quality.

How the quality measures were managed is a recurring theme found in the literature review when researching managements' employment of strategies designed to improve retention –for example Davies and Martinez, (2001) who recommended a robust and effective QA system as well as Martinez 1997 and Fitzcharles 2001 who called for effective QC systems. This is dealt with at senior management level in the discussion in and around table 5.2 above, where the managers gave a thorough description of the processes, as described by institute policy at all levels. In contrast, tutors, with one not replying, although agreeing that quality is important, concentrated their answers at their own level and were generally critical of the processes at this level. This relative lack of replies coupled with the tutors' body language and some of their comments on these processes, for example 'ill thought out and irrelevant', were fairly convincing evidence of dissention. This is also an indicator of a

possible implementation gap in applying the quality processes as espoused by policy. The limited replies of the tutors on QC and QA is in stark contrast with those of senior management and is another example of differing perspectives of two of the three main stakeholder groups.

At tutor level, the tutors' replies were lukewarm when discussing the ISLA process, despite this they agreed that it was important for retention as well as student progression and suggested that it must be improved. Some of the students were confused about the ISLA process with others less than enthusiastic. Therefore, some students are not benefiting from this important quality process. Clearly in the area of quality provision, there are differences in opinion between stakeholders and inconsistent as well as non uniform practice as espoused by policy. It can also be seen that the dimensions of Quality and to a lesser extent, Opportunity and Time are not being applied with constancy or consistently at all three levels as espoused by the Creemers' model.

Aim 4 Strategies for Improvement

With regard to research question 4.9 which investigated the strategies employed by management to improve retention and how they could be improved. The strategies used by LNIFHE according to the senior managers primarily were the support and guidance as well as quality control and assurance systems - this concurs with the findings in the literature review, for example HM Inspectorate, DES (1991) and Davies (1999). They also highlighted the fact that their policies were designed to employ an appropriate marketing and recruitment strategy, identify and help 'at risk' students and motivate staff. Note that the idea of consulting staff was not highlighted. On which areas could be refined to improve retention, senior managers mainly cited the ISLA process as well as, support and induction procedures.

Only two tutors commented on the management of retention generally stated that this is a complex problem and that professional expertise should be employed. On what strategies could be

employed to improve retention, two made no reply. The other four mentioned early 'at risk' identification and associated follow up. This latter reply has some resonance with the senior managers, who stated that they had a policy to identify such students. Either the tutors do not know of this policy or they do and feel that it needs to be improved. There is clearly an implementation gap regarding the espoused policy towards 'at risk' students. The lack of further detailed replies to question of employing strategies to manage and improve retention is suggestive of a divergence of opinion between these two stakeholders. In similar vein to the discussion immediately above and as was the case in the initial study, there was a feeling of tension in the tutors' replies concerning management and staff roles throughout the tutor interviews. This was reminiscent of and concurred with the contributions of Savory (2002) and Spours (1997) – that we must be acquainted with student's unique needs, seek the views of, motivate and empower staff as well as attempt improve communication between the three stakeholder groups. As a rationale for these points, Spours argues (1997 p.112) that the views of staff are important, as they are "key actors in improving the capability of colleges in this area".

When asked their opinion of the suitability of Creemers model to optimise retention, staff generally agreed that the consistent application of quality, opportunity and time at all levels ought to be performed but this was not being done consistently at present. It would seem that Creemers is a model to which people aspire rather than currently enact.

Although not asked about strategies directly, the students did give comments for improvements in the 'others' section. In summary they were, supply a quiet study area, improve the condition of books in library and make computers available during 'free time'. It can be noted that these limited views do not concur with the replies of the staff, although it must be emphasised that the students were not asked to comment on retention strategies. However it is suggestive of a divergence of stakeholders' views.

Conclusion

This survey exposed areas, which require attention. These areas include the discrepancy in opinion of quality processes between all three of the stakeholder groups. Other areas had a convergence of opinion, for example the fact that all three groups agreed on support at tutor level and saw achievement and success as being important motivators for student completion of courses.

The distillation of the views of staff broadly supports the idea that Creemers' model (appendix 5.3) provides a useful framework for interpreting the LNIFHE retention strategy. It was also noteworthy that senior management mentioned the centrality of the student - this will feature as part of a suggested model to be used as a framework for approaching retention, which will be discussed in chapter 6.

Although senior management state that they employ strategies to motivate staff, the implementation gaps described earlier could exist because of lower staff motivation. When the motivation of some staff is not assured or where there are implementation gaps or anomalies, the possible success of an aspirational model is not guaranteed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS and REFLECTIONS

This chapter consists of a short discussion of retention research, followed by a summary of the main findings, under the headings of the 4 main aims of this study; factors affecting retention, support and guidance as well as quality management processes and identification of strategies to improve retention. This will be followed with a discussion of recommendations, including a rationale for and description of, a proposed model for future use and suggestions of some areas of potentially fruitful future research. The chapter will conclude with comments on limitations, reflections and final remarks.

Student retention and withdrawal is not a new phenomenon but has increased steadily in importance due to factors such as funding for institutes, evolving programmes of study to suit changing markets, achievement and strategies/ methodologies for learning.

Retention research has been mostly a-theoretical, largely based on FEDA/LSDA reports on 'what works' in colleges and institutes. The empirical research undertaken for this study has found that at present, unlike in England, LNIFHE does not have a retention policy as a single entity, instead management use a range of retention related policies.

Summary of main findings.

The major finding of the survey is that with some exceptions, there are differences in perspectives of the three stakeholders and implementation gaps between espoused policy and practice at LNIFHE. This has been repeatedly highlighted in the previous chapter.

Aim 1 Factors Affecting Retention

Generally this research has indicated that factors connected with the student's experience both at and outside college had a strong influence on their decisions to complete or leave. These experiences included being made to feel welcome/feeling wanted by tutors, whether there is a 'caring attitude' by the college (Martinez 1995, Noel et. al. 1985). The early forming of relationships/ bonding with other students and staff (Martinez 1997, Hayes 1996, Vick 1997) were other factors, which influenced student motivation to complete. This concurs with the survey where some students reported 'friendliness of staff, caring tutors good teaching and making new friends' as being important factors influencing them to remain on course. Other external factors such as socio economic status (Palmer 2004) are also influential in each particular catchment area, although this particular factor was not researched in detail by this case study. The literature review and survey conducted for this research study has concurred with the findings of other researchers. Whatever the precise combination of factors acting on a given student, the support and quality provision elements are deemed to be very important in keeping such students enrolled on courses and are positively influential in their retention [e.g. Martinez (1995, 2002, 2001c), Medway and Pennay (1994), Davies (1999)].

However these latter authors have tended to report in great detail on the various internal and external influences on retention without analysing how these factors interact with each other. This is not a flaw in their work, their research is sound, but like all other research, it is incomplete. The importance of the phenomenon of interacting internal and external factors was taken up by Bloomer and Hodgkinson (2000a, 2000b) and Palmer (2004), who stated the external outweighed internal factors by 4 to 1 and indeed the cumulative effect of these factors as reported by Adamson and McAleavy (2000) are topics, which have not yet been researched thoroughly even though they almost certainly have a significant impact on retention at virtually all FHE institutions. There is a large

permutation of retention related internal and external factors at each institute that would need to be considered to encompass and comprehensively address the retention problem. It is clear that the particular permutation when applied to a given student will result in a need for support to overcome whatever problems are presented. It is interesting to note that in the survey, all 3 stakeholder groups generally viewed internal factors as being very important, although tutors viewed some negative factors coming from the external group. No respondent even considered the dimension of interaction of factors in their reply. For some, it is possible that being interviewed on campus instilled a bias towards internal factors although this does not account for the largely 'internal' replies of the withdrawn students. Apart from agreement on student success and achievement, as reported in the data analysis, it also appears that senior managers and tutors at LNIFHE are applying and following completely different PIs in their daily work. This finding has implications for the Triangle of Harmony model of chapter 2 page 38 in that differing perceptions of each-others' PIs could lead to disharmony among all three interested stakeholder groups, with negative implications for the students in terms of teaching and learning.

Aim 2 Support and Guidance

The support and guidance process is very important – this was the major area of agreement between the three stakeholders. These systems also fail at present to define or address the problems posed to retention by an 'at risk' student. After analysis of the processes used by LNIFHE and the results of the survey, this author can report that to date, this is still the situation. During the interview process for this research study, none of the tutors indicated that they employed any systematic method of monitoring, identifying and supporting such students. At the time of conducting this study, the 'at risk' policy was in the process of being constructed, partially informed by the research done by this author (McMahon et. al. 2004) and by the Retention Group, in which this author played a leading role. This group undertook a one year research study into retention at LNIFHE

in 2004-2005 and recommended the introduction of a retention policy, which contained an 'at risk' section. The threat to retention caused by the 'at risk' dimension has therefore not yet been quantified or, as far as we know, diminished. Regarding students' learning careers developing over time, Bloomer and Hodgkinson (1997, 1999) found that more than 50% of students changed their minds about intended courses between the final school term and first term in FE. This has profound implications for the 'at risk' nature of a sizable proportion of new students to FHE. The EMA financial support has been a success in retaining students.

Aim 3 Quality Management Processes

In the area of quality, the indicators used by LNIFHE can be found in the IQ: RS document, which measures the quality of teaching and learning. The only problem with IQ: RS is that it measures against DEL (Department of Education and Learning) set targets and does not measure the full picture. Annually, in June, each course team self-evaluates course performance against the standards of IQ: RS. The accuracy of the course review process is open to question as some of the tutors surveyed for this research study are not as motivated to perform such administrative duties as others – one of the tutors, when describing the quality procedures actually used the same words during the interview process as Justin Edwards, senior researcher of the LSDA for Northern Ireland, who stated that "some staff see this process as little more than a paper exercise". This finding also concurs with authors such as Spours (1997) who has also reported similar discrepancies in perception of duties between these two stakeholders. Management have partially taken account of staff opinion as this process also involves tutors being asked for their suggestions for improvement.

This however is not a complete description of the problem found here. It is the perception that management do not fully appreciate tutors' opinion that is a root cause of the motivational issue among staff. In addition individual tutor's comments on the managerial approach at LNIFHE and the discrepancies in opinion found in the

survey are suggestive of low morale among staff. This emerged in the tutor survey and can be summarised by the quote that management should “concentrate more on the feelings of the staff”. This view is also articulated by authors such as Randle and Bradley (1997) and Somekh et. al. (1999). The motivational issue mentioned above which could lead to inaccuracies in the appraisal system is a potential weakness in the construction of the CDP. Some students did not fully understand the ISLA process, although a slight majority praised the concept of it.

Aim 4 Strategies to Improve Retention

Strategies, which were reported in the survey by both senior management and some tutors, were that there should be:

- Properly constructed policies and follow up procedures with consultation with staff at all levels.
- Improved tutorial, induction, support, guidance QA and QC processes.
- Monitoring and tracking processes.
- An appropriate marketing and recruitment strategy.

Students were not asked for such strategies but did venture opinion on how to improve their experience - in summary they stated that there should be more computers, better quality books and a quieter study area.

In concurrence with other works in the field, such as Spours (1997) this study concludes the three main stakeholders, with some commonality of perspectives but also much diversity, are inextricably linked in the retention issue. It seems clear that the more harmonious their relationship, the better LNIFHE is placed to ensure optimum retention. Motivation is the catalyst for promoting the required harmony between them. Satisfaction was reported generally by the students when surveyed on the quality of support systems and teaching, variables known to be important in motivating students to remain on course. Some research has been done into staff motivation and satisfaction, with linkage between this and student satisfaction. The theme of staff satisfaction which involved feeling

and being better valued was picked up by Owen and Davies (2003) who argued that management and staff should be concerned about any general tendency towards negativity in staff opinion. They further stated that satisfied learners are associated with satisfied staff with consequent better student retention and achievement. This author would argue that if the managers are motivated, consensual and persuasive, the staff will be more motivated and persuasive with the result that the students then are better motivated. This latter sequence if maintained will help to minimise the retention problem. This view is supported by Martinez (1997, 2000) who argued that when management acted to improve student motivation the retention rate also improved.

The survey component of this study underlined some major differences of opinion among management and tutors principally in relation to perceptions of each-others' roles and opinions. There were also differences between these two stakeholders and students – for example in relation to the ISLA process. An interesting feature emerged during the interviewing of staff - when answering the set questions, senior managers occasionally referred to the opinion of the teaching staff as did the tutors to both students and senior staff. There were few direct references from senior staff to student opinion with the exception of the way motivation, cascading from teacher to student could affect retention. This relative scarcity of references and by implication, adherences to student opinion by senior managers was at odds with the student centred nature of LNIFHE's approach as stated in the espoused policies of the CDP and official retention related policies as outlined in the CDP, both of which were drawn up by senior management. Another example of this type of 'implementation gap' between policy and practice unearthed by the survey was in the area of application of some of the quality processes. Here some tutoring staff stated that they do not fully adhere to the policies and view some of the processes as paper exercises.

Recommendations

LNIFHE should adopt a more holistic, humanist, student centred approach to retention

As has been found by the literature review and the survey, the feelings and perceptions of students are an important factor in determining the nature of the educational experience received in FHE. This type of 'caring' approach has been shown by authors such as Noel et. al. (1985) to be positively influential in student retention. The institute should therefore put more resources into analysing students' needs and supporting them

Construct a retention policy based on this approach

At the time of the conduction of the survey, LNIFHE did not have a retention policy as a single entity and relied on a range of retention related policies. This system was inefficient, added complexity, made it difficult for staff and management to have an overview of the problem and probably contributed to the differences in perspectives found in the survey. LNIFHE should construct a retention policy which places the student at the centre of all that the organisation does. This policy should be based on and informed by a customised retention research programme undertaken by the core research unit, mentioned below. LNIFHE should also appoint a retention officer either for the entire organisation or have a person appointed in each school to perform retention orientated duties peculiar to that school.

Establish a core research unit

As a result of the findings of the survey, for example that the stakeholders had different perspectives of quality management, LNIFHE should establish a core research unit, which could gather data on why this is so and suggest methods to improve the situation. This unit need not be expensive in terms of finance or staff resources, as the duties could be part of the contract of a retention officer. Alternatively, a senior lecturer, who teaches 3 hours per week less than other lecturers could, for this time undertake the planning, collection and analysis of any data from a topic under investigation. The costs would be around £2500 per year, which is approximately

the cost of each student who withdraws. The marketing unit which also gathers data from student surveys could input data and help with collation. Other FHE colleges could do likewise and the results networked to establish a mutually beneficial benchmarking strategy.

Motivate students

A method of motivating students by raising expectations and helping them to share the college ethos through mentoring schemes and better tutorial and support packages as argued by Martinez (1996, 1997) should be introduced. The research unit described above could help to redesign ISLA forms to be more useful and attractive for student completion.

Improve communication with and motivate staff

As can be deduced from the data analysis, the survey has exposed differences in stakeholders' perspectives regarding the implementation of policy. Therefore each individual retention strategy should "engage teaching teams" (Martinez 2003) and address the issues of how tutors and senior management, two of the three stakeholders of the harmony triangle, conceive their roles and the particular position of the student, who the survey has found is regarded as central at LNIFHE. In order to implement such new policies, it is essential for staff to have clarity about the processes and goals (Gross 1971). Fullan (1999) states that clarity among complexity is a major problem and in a later paper, stated "lack of clarity – diffuse goals and unspecified means of implementation – represents a major problem at the implementation stage" (Fullan 2001 p.77). To address the issue of implementation gaps which this survey has unearthed and described in the previous chapter, senior management must therefore improve communication with as well as motivate staff and always be inclined to clarify issues raised by staff.

The annual course review process is an open and transparent means of reviewing retention within the year and at the level between HOS and tutors, the communication is good. However, to increase the efficiency of this system, communication should be improved between senior management and tutors. In tandem with this, a

programme of retention awareness, which was initiated by LNIFHE management at the start of the year 04-05, should be continued until measurable progress is being made and the problem reduced.

Understand the effect of motivating factors

From the literature review component of this study it was discovered that apart from the work of Adamson and McAleavy (2000), there has been a lack of research to systematically measure motivation among students during their tenure at a further education institution.

Although some motivating factors are known and established, such as those itemised in question 12 of the student survey, it is how they fuse together to motivate a particular student in each unique context that has not yet been established. As motivation is an influential factor in student retention, it is therefore important for management and staff at LNIFHE to understand the interaction and cumulative effect of motivating factors.

Establish an 'at risk' strategy

From the findings and desk search parts of this study, it is apparent that the threat to retention caused by the 'at risk' dimension has not yet been fully evaluated. It would seem imperative that a potential student who could be at risk of withdrawal be identified as early as possible using a simple and easily introduced type of procedure as that developed by McMahon et. al. (2004). The student who is identified as being at risk could then be tracked and assigned to a mentor or tutor. Also, to improve a student centred, more humanist approach, enact a process such as the Open University's PASS system. Here students, including those 'at risk' are contacted proactively by telephone at home if necessary to establish if there are any unseen problems, as suggested by Simpson (2006). This has the effect of increased motivation and from a student's perspective, gives the college a more caring approach.

Understand the process of change

LNIFHE should also seek to change its culture to accommodate the change and impact to retention brought about by the introduction of new policies and curricular innovations, as suggested by Martinez

(1996, 1997). Changing culture tends to be a slow and time-consuming operation; however motivating staff can facilitate this process. The key managerial areas to be addressed here are management of people and strategic planning – this can be done with liberal use of the key managerial competency of communication and the valuing of staff opinion. To this end, all staff, but particularly management, lecturers and students must share a common set of aims and objectives. A divided approach will lead to intra-college confusion and to lowered qualitative outcomes for all. Ongoing staff development training will be required to ensure that all staff remain motivated (Martinez 1996, 1997, 2000) and aware of each other's perspective. This is a process that could take a significant amount of time to realise but is achievable if the goodwill and motivation of primarily the tutors is present. The importance of establishing and maintaining good lines of communication and taking account of both student / staff opinion when making decisions are features cannot be overstated.

Reduce paperwork

In the survey, some staff and students complained of excessive paperwork. The ISLA, interview and enrolment forms should be redesigned to reduce the amount of repetitive paperwork, which students and tutors must complete. The enrolment process should be improved in LNIFHE with less paperwork and duplication of information to be provided by the student. As a tutor commented in the survey "there was too much form filling for students at the start of each year with unnecessary duplication". NICIS could be used more effectively to achieve this, the result of which would be improved support for the teaching team, a reduction of the paper trail and greater facilitation for the tutor to place more emphasis on tracking the relevant students. This has now been introduced at LNIFHE.

Agree on appropriate performance indicators for each course

This survey has discovered a more general issue is present here – it is that tutoring and managerial staff at their different levels in LNIFHE are applying and following completely different PIs in their daily work.

Although this is probably a normal scenario, it is a key recommendation of this research study that improvements in communication be made – these would improve the mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's viewpoints. This action will probably alleviate and largely remove discrepancies, which exist between the perspectives and opinions of the three stakeholder groups and be beneficial to the quality of provision to as well as improve the achievement of, the student. By a process of empowerment, tutors and lecturers should also adopt a more caring and humanist approach which will facilitate the establishment of mutually agreed performance indicators and goals for the student to achieve. This will improve the prospects of student retention.

All courses have varying types of success indicators associated with them. As yet there is no method of comparing whether some indicators are appropriate to all courses. For example, LNIFHE has imposed a retention target of 85% for all courses without differentiating between those programmes which are successful in retaining students and those which are not, an example of the latter being Adult Access, which bring extra problems and consequently are less successful at retention. There should be a greater level of consistency throughout the Institute and in this regard, appropriate and agreed level indicators with targets and dates for achievement should be embedded in all courses.

Reach a shared understanding and approach to quality delivery

On the management of quality, LNIFHE manages the quality assurance and improvement process in different ways and has become very mechanistic in approach, partly as a result of external accountability demands. They depend on course reviews, appraisals and examination results to inform them. The execution of these processes does not allow the college to answer a question such as are staff improving their teaching? If staff responses indicate that there is an improvement, how can senior managers know this is genuinely the case? There is a cultural barrier, which indicators cannot demonstrate – again, more comprehensive communication

with staff and appreciation of their views about QC / QA issues coupled with a drive to achieve a shared understanding of and approach to these issues would help to address this. It seems obvious that a further question concerning how we as staff could better be motivated to self-measure and consequently improve our standards of delivery should be posed and answered.

Establish a benchmarking strategy

Benchmarking has not been systematically done in LNIFHE. This is an essential tool for improving quality. Regular reviews of internal and external good practices which are found to aid retention and achievement should be held in each department and benchmarked.

Provide targeted support to students during early part of course

As reported by Bloomer and Hodkinson (1997, 1999), a significant proportion of students change their mind about career choice immediately before or after enrolment, it is therefore important that we should enlarge our view of the retention problem and think of it as 'recruitment and retention'. Therefore because initial contact will have increased importance, enrolment procedures should be refined to enable all relevant information from students to be gleaned and recorded in minimal time during the first interview stage as called for by Clarke (2001) and staff in the survey. Such students who change their mind or are unsure of their chosen course could be thought of as being 'at risk' and identified at induction by the process stated above. Arrangements and advice to enable them to change to a more appropriate course could be enacted at an early stage. To identify further students for signs of withdrawal at an early stage in the college year, the importance of which was identified by Gutteridge (2001) and Kerka (1995) an 'at risk' alert grid (appendix 5.5 McMahon et. al. 2004) would be completed after one month as an integral part of the ISLA process. It is therefore important for each student in LNIFHE to have regular contact with a trained and experienced tutor who will act at an early stage to minimise problems either external or internal, such as personal family problems or incorrect course placement and ward off possible withdrawal.

Humanise our approach to supporting students

As part of the new student centred approach by LNIFHE, extended orientation and advisory programs should be put in place. These programs, coupled with improved and positive connections with college personnel, as well as the appointed tutor will enhance the early experience of the student at college. As Noel et.al. (1985 p. 17) remarked - " it is the people who come face to face with the student who provide the positive experiences...and the caring attitude of college personnel which are the most potent retention force on a college campus".

Continuously review and refine entry procedures

LNIFHE should ensure that pre course guidance enrolment and induction procedures are regularly reviewed and evaluated. These procedures should include features such as tasters, early and accurate basic skills screening, meeting the whole programme team, parent evening if appropriate, an entry requirement review and generally, a more comprehensive induction package developed. The induction process should be elongated to allow students more opportunity to sample and receive additional advice and guidance on particular courses this will help motivate them and help with correct course placement. Pre-entry and on-entry guidance staff must be adequately trained for example in interviewing techniques. The importance of advice, guidance and support both at induction and subsequently form another 2 of the 6 elements of Martinez (1996, 1997).

Review and refine the tutorial system

Management should also initiate a study of and decide on a system of best practice in tutorial provision then ensure that all staff adhere to this common strategy - an example of this could be the use of the toolkit developed by McMahon et al (2004). For example, the approach of tutors could be standardised by having and using a handbook for tutors, containing targets, important dates and rules which all must adhere to, within the college retention strategy. LNIFHE management should study attendance and achievement

monitoring and establish how it should be improved. Improved tracking and monitoring procedures to ensure prompt attention to support those students who show signs of poor attendance must be installed as urged by authors such as Martinez (1996, 1997) and McMahon et. al. (2004). These measures must also precisely record the data relating to the terms 'retention on course', 'retention on another course' or 'withdrawal'.

Extend financial support

Methods of extending the EMA or other financial support should be examined. LNIFHE should regularly and proactively invite students to discuss their financial position with either the appointed tutor or the student services co-ordinator to establish if need exists.

Improve follow-up procedures

The improvement of follow-up procedures has positive implications for retention and is an important finding of this research. In order that support and quality provision are improved, precise reasons for withdrawal on all courses must be retrieved. To achieve this, it is important to ensure that system allows students to supply multiple reasons for their withdrawal and tutors be given directed time and responsibility to interview withdrawn students by any appropriate available method such as the excellent model suggested by Palmer (2004, appendix 3). A comprehensive interview, by telephone if necessary, should be undertaken with those students who have 'dropped out' to establish a set of reasons. This will be an improvement on the present system of 'single answer' reasons for non-completion. The subsequent analysis of such a survey should be shared with staff and any pertinent issues that arise are acted upon.

Rationale for a Student Centred Variant of Creemers' Model

The total quality management approach places the student at the centre of a system, permeated with quality provision at all levels. This TQM approach links well with LNIFHE's stated policy (appendix 4.4), which also places the student at the centre of quality provision. The Creemers strategy is a good fit to the espoused policy framework at LNIFHE according to senior managers and some tutors. It is a rational model, which is good at outlining policy intentions and how they should operate, like the TQM approach - at all levels. However, as Fullan (2001) argues, rational models do not work in practice – this is because staff do not always interpret or implement policy intention, as management would expect. Indeed he argues (Fullan 2001 p.108) we all interpret in different ways and that “effective implementation is a process of clarification to staff”. As outlined in this thesis, there can be other reasons for this implementation gap, for example, lack of motivation, genuine misunderstanding leading to non-uniform performance, dissatisfaction with managerial attitude etc. The idea that staff should feel valued emerged in the survey and literature review by Savory (2002) and Owen and Davies (2003). Furthermore, Davies and Coates (2005 p. 109) were critical of the imposition of rational management approaches from private industry and argued that “rational planning model is not an appropriate basis for school (college) management”.

This suggests that a more humanistic approach should be attempted. This can be done through the added dimension of support, a feature that has appeared in the survey and literature review as being very important regarding retention. Supporting a student to give extra quality, time and therefore opportunity to overcome problems, increase motivation and improve retention. This new approach will be operated optimally if all stakeholders are sufficiently motivated. Better communication among the three stakeholder groups will help with mutual appreciation and understanding of each-other's perspectives as well as improve motivation and will help to achieve this.

Creemers' model is limited because it does not exclusively place the student at the centre. In addition, Creemers depends on the idea of 'promissory factors' and 'extensivity'. To optimise the chance of successful application of the model, it must be applied holistically, in ever widening circles of permeability, promises must be kept and as a result, constancy maintained. These are difficult conditions to maintain in an ever - changing situation. It is perhaps time to think about the concept of 'co - extensivity' which could be thought of as an interactive process between each of the overlapping spheres of figure 6.1 on page 158. In this situation, there would be extensive co-operation between, within and beyond each sphere, leaving room for unpredictability.

For the above reasons, it seems that a new approach should be postulated – a new way of thinking about conceptualising a framework for optimising retention - the adaptation of the Creemers rational, systems approach to a more humanistic, student centred model which takes into account both student and staff interpretations and meanings. This is analogous to the TQM approach where the customer / student is the central focus of concern and whose views and needs are important to the educational organisation.

In order to achieve success with this model, effective planning must be initiated. As has been argued, rational planning models do not work. Regarding adaptation and implementation, there should be planning appropriate for a 'non rational' world - as Patterson, Purkey and Parker (1986 p.61) put it "the goal of strategic planning is to produce a stream of wise decisions designed to achieve the mission of the organisation where emphasis shifts from product to process as the planning process builds in flexibility for adaptation to changing conditions in and out of the organisation". They argue that planning must take into account constantly changing internal and external factors, using short term plans which are informed using qualitative as well as quantitative data. This approach blends in well with some findings and recommendations above. For example, adopting a more flexible and humanist approach, addressing internal and external dimensions, called for by authors such

as Palmer (2004) and using data which could be gleaned from the core research unit called for above. A more detailed discussion of some of the above points together with graphical illustrations of the model follows below.

The nature of education in the FHE sector is transforming from a teaching to a teaching and learning scenario. In the literature review, articulation that the students' needs and opinions are important was made by Ishikawa (1985), Martinez (1997) and Fitzcharles (2001). This point was strengthened by comment made by one AD in the survey that "The learner needs to be at the centre of what the organisation does". The other AD when discussing the idea of adapting the Creemers model to have the student support dimension added, commented "this will make it more student-centred and could form the basis of LNIFHE's strategy for the foreseeable future". Espoused policy regards the student as being paramount, as one tutor stated: "Today's student should be at the centre of our attention". The following points must be borne in mind:

- Courses must be 'fit for purpose' – Owen (2002) and for improved retention, there must be a strong correlation between student needs/abilities and course designation as found by Clarke (2001). They also must be, according to the director, the "correct course" for the student.
- Learning is a cumulative process and the classroom may no longer be the epicentre of student research and learning – homework, coursework's, assignments are increasingly common given the nature of curriculum changes. A greater proportion of learning takes place outside of the classroom today than in earlier epochs – this was pointed out by the director and three of the tutors during the interview component of this research study and is stated in the written response by senior management (appendix 5.4).

Therefore it can be argued that the student should lie at the 'centre' of an 'intersecting set' scenario, which begins at the dimension of civil society. This is shown diagrammatically in figure 6.1.

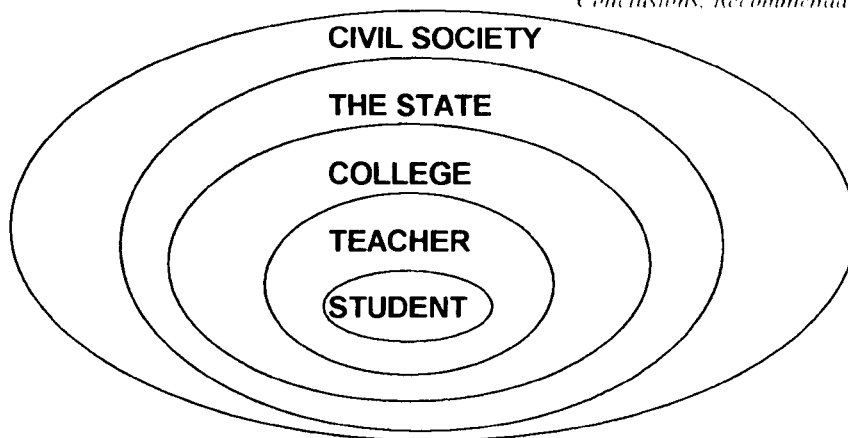


Figure 6.1 the Intersecting Set Scenario

In term of context, teaching and learning are symbiotic – but the symbiosis overlaps with environmental factors such as built environment, infrastructure, etc. It is from this complex mix that factors affecting retention be distilled and analysed. It is the combination of external and internal factors that is important as articulated by Palmer (2004) and their interaction highlighted by Adamson and McAleavy (2000). Strategic planning is the key - the college must invest in both material and human resources and provide an educational framework that reflects the changing needs/demands of society. It seems obvious that LNIFHE should ensure that the student is placed at the centre of approach to constructing a strategy to optimise retention and provide the dimensions of quality, opportunity and time. This is discussed below.

Quality

It would appear logical that for optimal student performance and consequently achievement and retention, quality should permeate all aspects of a student's experience within the FHE environment. As was reported in the tutor interviews, "today's student should receive quality at all levels and at all times". Quality must be omnipresent in the learning experience of the FHE student today whether this is due to directed and passive or dynamic and autonomous learning. In a classroom, quality relates to the holistic environment including physical, mental and experiencing first class teaching as commented upon by Martinez in 1995, as well as other relevant phenomena experienced by the learner.

Opportunity

Opportunity is a two-way phenomenon in that it entails both the invitation by the college and its staff and the possibility of acceptance of the offer by the student. LNIFHE's mission statement (appendix 2.3) clarifies that we must aim to "provide opportunity for all students in their agreed learning programmes". This is done by the provision of, for example, timetables and fit for purpose accommodation, along with mentoring and learning support programmes. The opportunity to learn has been found to be an important factor in student achievement and is commented on by staff in this survey and various researchers such as Reynolds et. al. (1996) and Scheerens (1992). Opportunity must therefore permeate all levels of the student experience at LNIFHE.

Time

In similar vein to the two preceding phenomena, and as commented upon in the survey by staff, time is an essential element and is also part of the triadic compound consisting of the quality, opportunity and time itself. For example it can be argued that without allocating appropriate time to fulfil competencies in the managing, teaching and learning, the process of teaching and learning would not take place. It would appear therefore, that time management, which entails a programmatic approach to both teaching and learning, must also be present at all levels in this college. Clearly the learner, whose needs are to be addressed, must reside at the centre of the quality – opportunity – time triad, represented in figure 6.2 below. This approach, espoused to by policy in appendix 4.4 and commented on favourably by respondents in the survey, will optimise each student's potential and maximise achievement – according to Creemers (1994) and consequently retention.

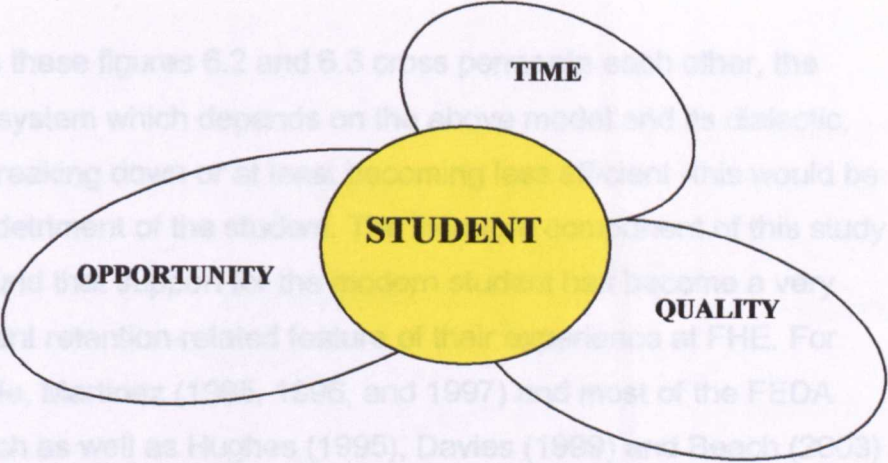


Figure 6.2 The Centrality of the Student

It is also apparent from the nature of LNIFHE’s student centred pathway policy (appendix 4.4) and the assistant director’s comment above that the student also must reside at the centre of the teaching - management - curriculum triad of figure 6.3 and therefore be the stakeholder of pivotal importance in figure 2.9, the harmony triangle, mentioned earlier in this research study page 38

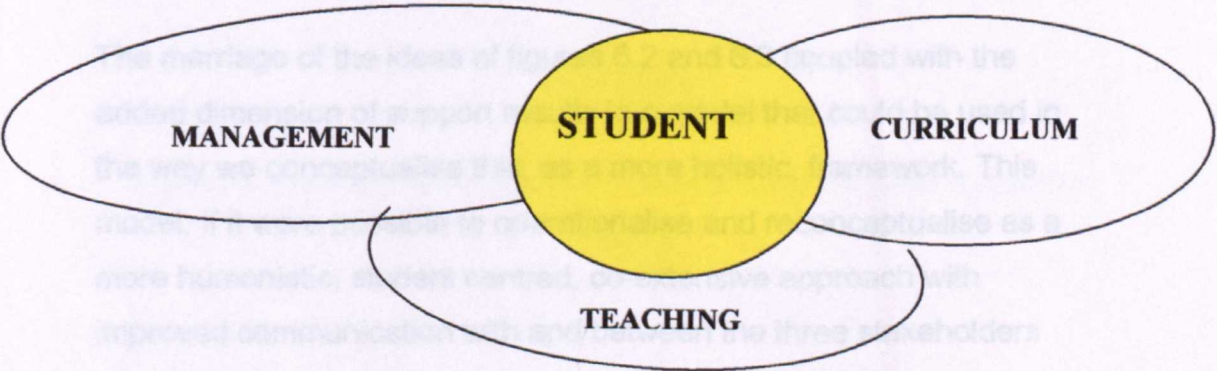


Figure 6.3 The Centrality of the Student

A Student Centred Model for Optimising Retention

Unless these figures 6.2 and 6.3 cross permeate each other, the whole system which depends on the above model and its dialectic, risks breaking down or at least becoming less efficient -this would be to the detriment of the student. The literature component of this study has found that support for the modern student has become a very important retention-related feature of their experience at FHE. For example, Martinez (1995, 1996, and 1997) and most of the FEDA research as well as Hughes (1995), Davies (1999) and Beach (2003) state that support was one of the three most important dimensions of influence on student retention. The results of the survey performed for this research study agrees with this - the students, tutors and management in differing ways cited support as being very important. It seems logical then to include support, applied both to the internal and external dimensions of a student's experience as being of great importance for today's learner. Support could co-relate with, harmonise and form a bridge between internal and external dimensions, the relative importance of which have been debated by authors such as Martinez (1995) and Palmer (2004).

The marriage of the ideas of figures 6.2 and 6.3 coupled with the added dimension of support results in a model that could be used in the way we conceptualise this, as a more holistic, framework. This model, if it were possible to operationalise and reconceptualise as a more humanistic, student centred, co-extensive approach with improved communication with and between the three stakeholders should enhance the experience of the student at LNIFHE and optimise retention. This emphasis on a more student centred, humanistic approach is in contrast to the managerial approach which permeates much of the literature on retention presently. Diagrammatically the model is represented in figure 6.4 and could be labelled SQOT - support, quality, opportunity, time.

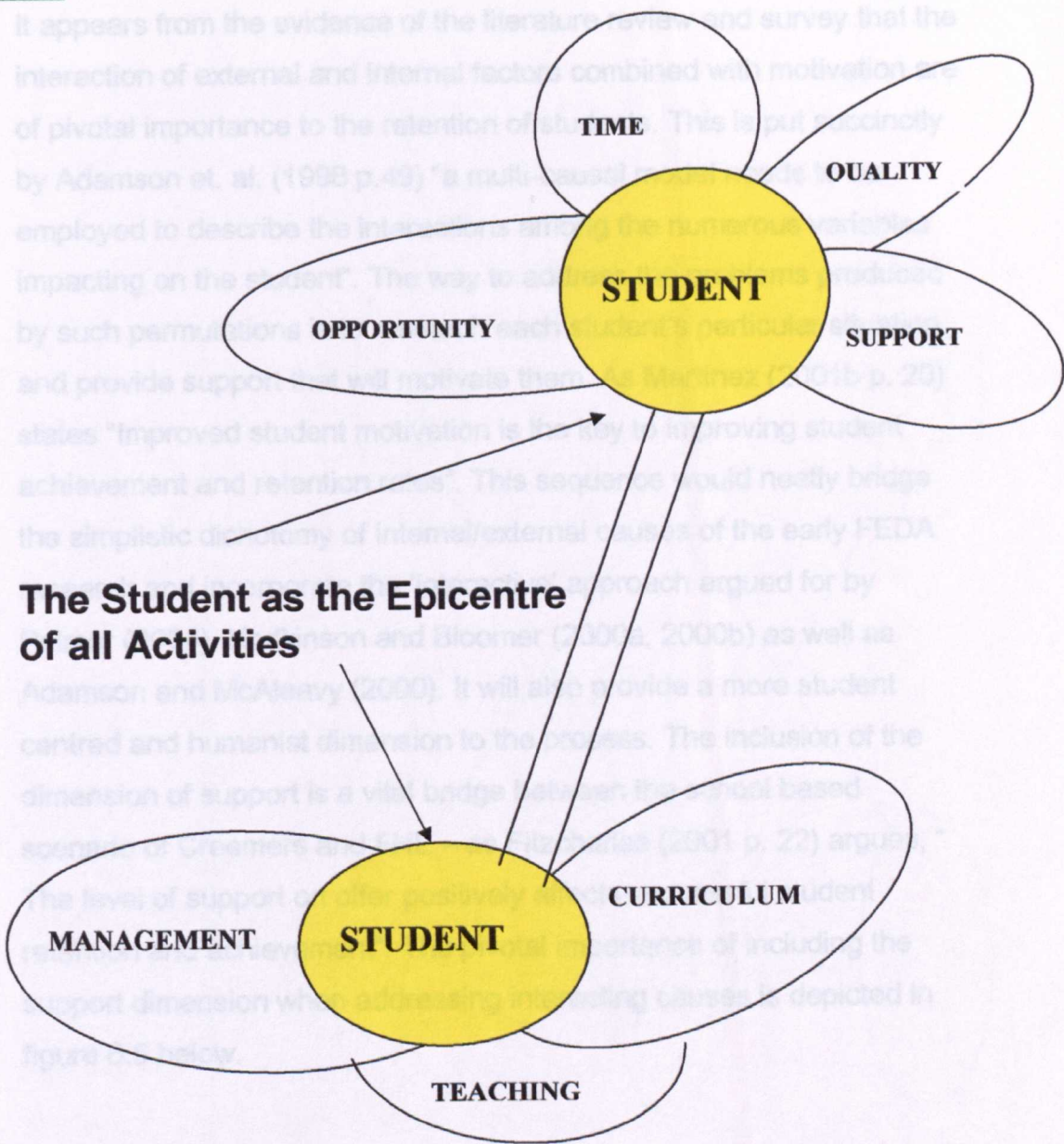


Figure 6.4 A Proposed Model for Maximising Student Retention (SQOT)

It appears from the evidence of the literature review and survey that the interaction of external and internal factors combined with motivation are of pivotal importance to the retention of students. This is put succinctly by Adamson et. al. (1998 p.49) "a multi-causal model needs to be employed to describe the interactions among the numerous variables impacting on the student". The way to address the problems produced by such permutations is to research each student's particular situation and provide support that will motivate them. As Martinez (2001b p. 20) states "Improved student motivation is the key to improving student achievement and retention rates". This sequence would neatly bridge the simplistic dichotomy of internal/external causes of the early FEDA research and incorporate the 'interactive' approach argued for by Palmer (2004), Hodgkinson and Bloomer (2000a, 2000b) as well as Adamson and McAleavy (2000). It will also provide a more student centred and humanist dimension to the process. The inclusion of the dimension of support is a vital bridge between the school based scenario of Creemers and FHE – as Fitzcharles (2001 p. 22) argues, "The level of support on offer positively affects successful student retention and achievement". The pivotal importance of including the support dimension when addressing interacting causes is depicted in figure 6.5 below.

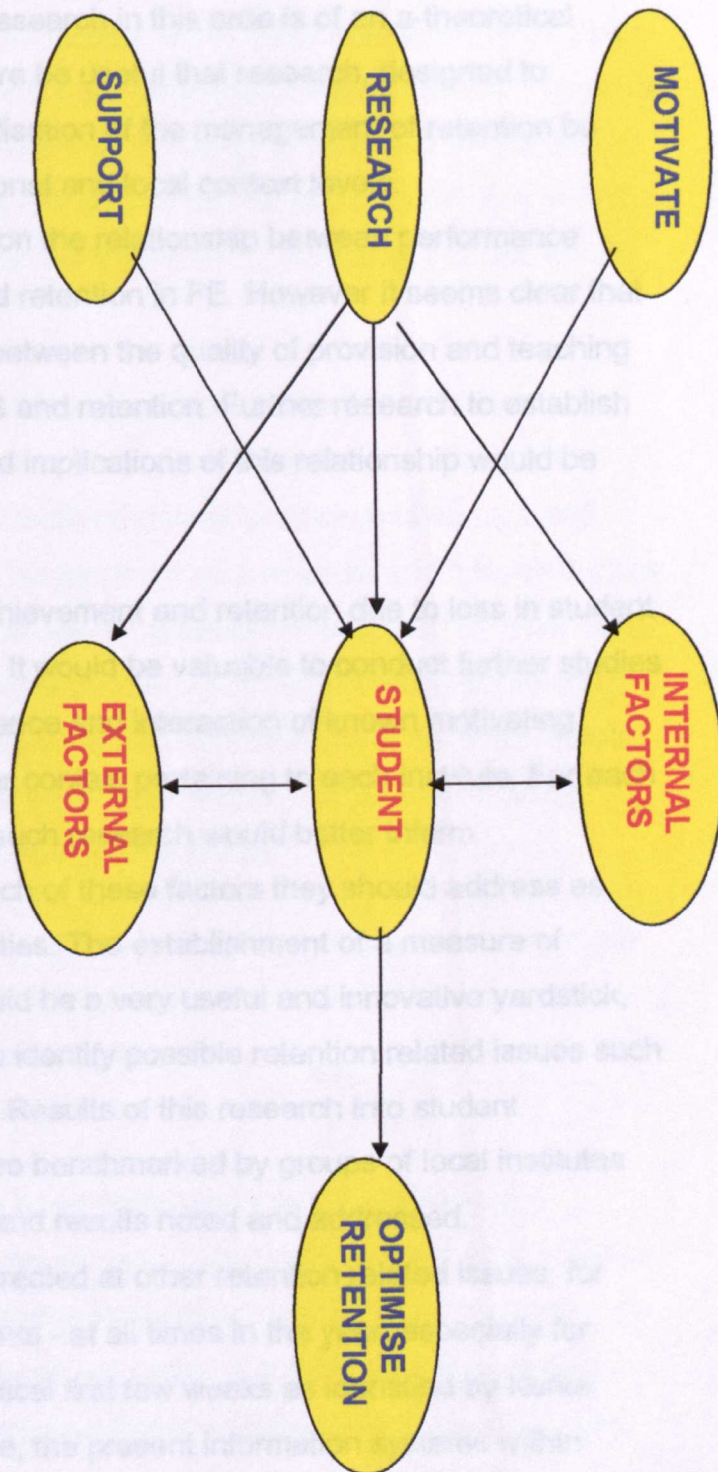


Figure 6.5 The Pivotal Importance of Support

Areas for future research

There is scope for longitudinal studies in a range of institutes to establish how convergence among the opinions of the main stakeholder groups could be achieved.

As the nature of such research in this area is of an a-theoretical nature, it would therefore be useful that research, designed to develop our conceptualisation of the management of retention be carried out both at national and local context levels.

There is little research on the relationship between performance indicators of quality and retention in FE. However it seems clear that there is a relationship between the quality of provision and teaching as measured by IQ: RS and retention. Further research to establish the nature, strength and implications of this relationship would be worthwhile.

The implications for achievement and retention due to loss in student motivation are serious. It would be valuable to conduct further studies into the relative importance and interaction of known motivating factors for the particular context pertaining to each institute. For each context, the results of such research would better inform management as to which of these factors they should address as their most urgent priorities. The establishment of a measure of student motivation would be a very useful and innovative yardstick, which could be used to identify possible retention related issues such as the 'at risk' student. Results of this research into student motivation could be also benchmarked by groups of local institutes with common themes and results noted and addressed.

Research should be directed at other retention related issues, for example 'at risk' students - at all times in the year, especially for example during the critical first few weeks as identified by Kerka (1995). As noted above, the present information systems within LNIFHE and other institutes are not designed to produce data which would identify an 'at risk' student. Research should be initiated widely to gather sufficient information to gather, quantify, analyse and make a determination of which factors are important in such identification.

This data, analysed over a period of some years would allow a systematic design of an agreed process involving an induction questionnaire containing weighted scores assigned to the answers (such as the example in appendix 5.5 by McMahon et. al. 2004). In addition, cognisance should be taken of the high proportion of students who change their career plans either just before or just after entering FHE. Therefore a topic generated for future research by this doctorate could be *'the analysis of changing students' career plans between and during the last term at school and the first term at FHE'*. Such research could also contribute to our knowledge of the 'at risk' phenomenon.

Research is also needed into the mechanisms that drive the interaction of the internal and external dimensions of a student's experience. This would build on Palmer's criticism of current and previous research that "separating these external and internal factors into dichotomous groups was an artificial construction" (Palmer 2004 p. 94). The previous research referred to can be neatly summed up as regarding the retention problem as consisting of permutations of causes or factors which were "multi causal, complex and highly context specific" by Martinez (1995 p. 23).

It would also be very useful to conduct action research in the whole area of adult provision and their associated demands. These differing demands have been noted by Hughes in 1995 and McGivney in 1996 who also call for such research.

Although research has been performed into the opinions of withdrawn students, it would need to be undertaken at each institute as the context and students involved are unique. A benchmark comparison could be made with other institutes and with excellent studies such as Medway and Pennay (1994), Kennedy (1997) and Callender (1999), which would establish common features. Finally, it would be useful and necessary to apply, test, refine and develop the proposed SQOT model as circumstances in FHE change over time. This would be a fruitful area of future research.

Reflections and Concluding Remarks

Generally, the world is being driven by economics and further education appears to be following this 'acquisitive society' dogma. Incorporation has subsumed FHE into a monetarist, economic rationale and has reduced the human values/ resources dimension in favour of this narrow 'reductive' theory. The result is that the philosophy to enrol as many students as possible or practical has become of pivotal importance instead of tailoring the students to appropriate courses, not necessarily at LNIFHE. Some tutors will feel under pressure to recruit the maximum number of students in order to retain a sufficient number to keep their jobs. This will not necessarily be the case as there must be a correct fit between the students' abilities and tailored courses offered. Any major misfit will permanently affect, exacerbate and prolong the retention problem. Ironically, by paying incentives such as the EMA allowance, we are improving retention – this could be interpreted as using the narrow economic rationale of 'free market problems require free market solutions'. Paying should not be the primary motive for the retention of students: retention should be a personal, educational and motivationally related issue. As was found by the survey and literature review, the correct approach should be of a more humanist nature and should insist that the student must be at the centre of everything the college does.

To optimise retention, good teaching and learning strategies must be maintained. The 'dialectical' process of learning is a dynamic one where the process of effectively transferring inputs to outputs is one that depends on a systematic, professional and quality-laden approach. No matter how effective a teacher is: s/he will always be situated in a nexus of dynamics that are often variable and indeed unpredictable – with uncertain implications for retention. To further complicate the issue, we must bear in mind that we are all 'human beings' in an existential situation. Human fallibilities will of necessity render all 'effective teaching models' into 'pseudo – effective teaching models'. The fact is that whilst we strive to create and

sustain effective teaching and learning models; society, government, bureaucrats, communities and individuals will often not fully understand, support or comply with the principles found in these models. These issues are at the core of the educational modelling dilemma. However if management listen to, value and support both staff and students, and tutors similarly value / support students, the harmony triangle will be stable. We will then maximise their achievement and ultimately, retention.

It is hoped that this case study has added to the body of knowledge and the understanding of retention from the perspectives of the 3 main stakeholder groups. The study explored similarities and differences in the perspectives of these 3 groups and discovered implementation gaps between the espoused policies of and practice at LNIFHE. A tentative model, SQOT with the student placed at the centre, for the optimisation of retention in LNIFHE was forwarded. This model might be tested and developed by LNIFHE or other institutes. In addition, the importance of student and staff opinion, coupled and directly linked to their motivation has been introduced to the debate by this study.

There have been implications for professional practice and policy at LNIFHE. As a direct result of and informed by opinion gleaned from the survey component, LNIFHE has designed a retention policy which includes elements from this case study, for example the 'at risk' procedure of appendix 5.5. One component of this policy is the undertaking of regular retention related staff development, which, it is hoped has the effect of informing and motivating staff. It is intended that this will have an impact on for example, achieving a mutually agreed approach to quality issues at all levels in the institute.

It is interesting that a study of retention such as this promotes a call for research into more general considerations such as motivation or improved information systems. This is indicative of the complex nature of the fusion of human interactions with the other internal and external factors identified by this research study as being important to student retention. It is incumbent on the professionals working in

FHE to continue to research this topic until student withdrawals are minimised and retention optimised.

Limitations and Strengths

This was a case study, performed with limited time and resources at the disposal of the author, it is not generalisable to all colleges but it is hoped that it nevertheless usefully adds to the body of research and helps to provide an important stepping stone in the battle to maximise student retention. The strengths of the study include its cost effectiveness, and its replicability at any other institute by almost any professional and its contribution to research in the field and to critical debate. Limitations include a small control group of students and staff who were surveyed in just one year. Clearly a larger sample, surveyed over several years, coupled with inclusion of the opinion of withdrawn students, which authors such as Martinez have found to be a rich source of information, would have added strength to the findings. Nevertheless it is hoped that it will be a useful contribution to the retention debate.

Finally I will finish the research study by quoting a line from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech of January 1960: *"Ask not what our country can do for us but what can we do for our country"*. My philosophy for improving the management of student retention is analogous to this and could be expressed as

"Ask not what the students can do for us but what can we do for our students"

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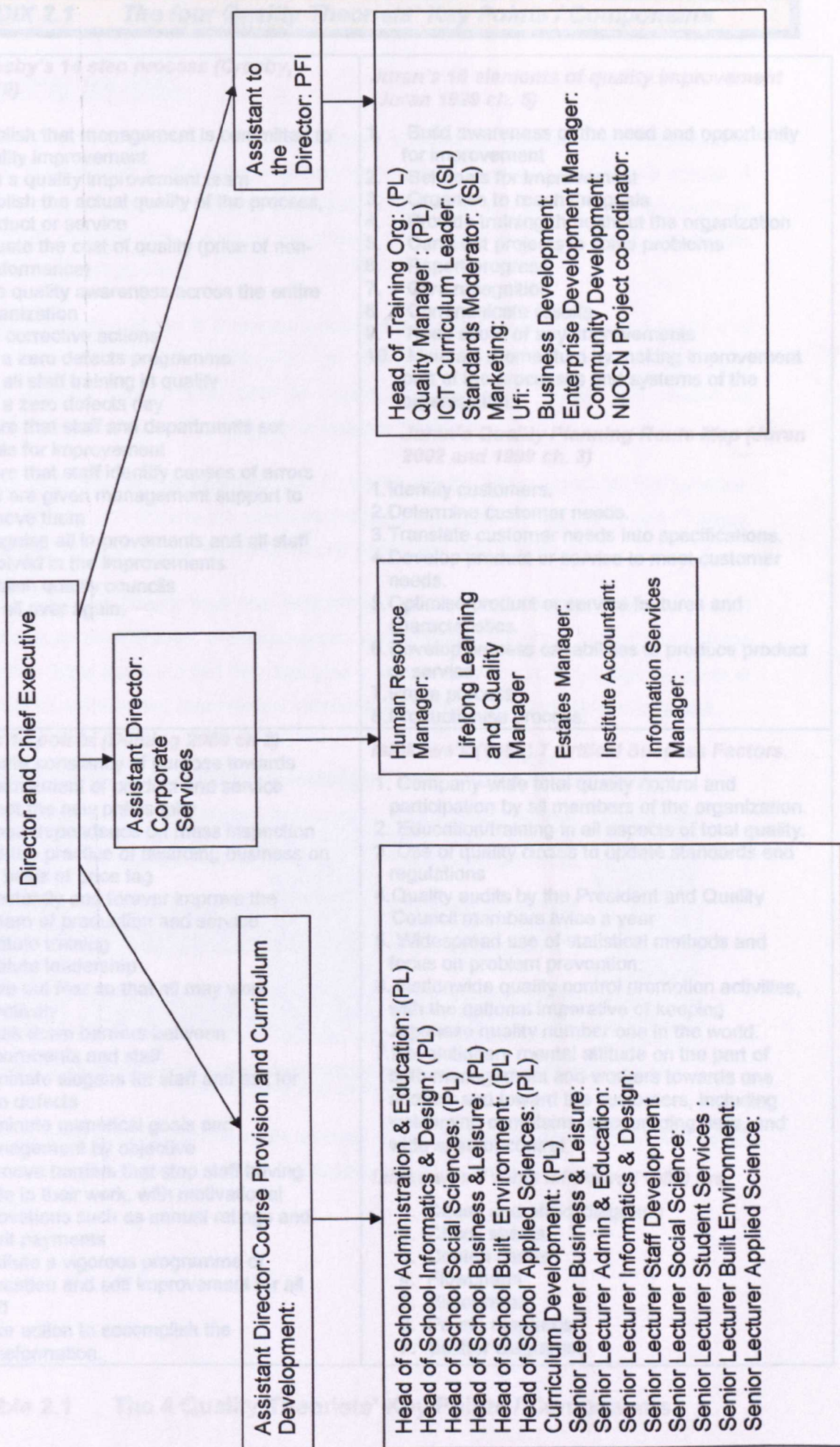
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APPENDIX 1.1 LNIFHE Management Structure



APPENDIX 2.1
The four Quality Theorists' Key Points / Components

<p>Crosby's 14 step process (Crosby, 1979)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish that management is committed to quality improvement 2. Form a quality improvement team 3. Establish the actual quality of the process, product or service 4. Evaluate the cost of quality (price of non-conformance) 5. Raise quality awareness across the entire organization 6. Take corrective actions 7. Plan a zero defects programme 8. Give all staff training in quality 9. Hold a zero defects day 10.Ensure that staff and departments set goals for improvement 11.Ensure that staff identify causes of errors and are given management support to remove them 12.Recognise all improvements and all staff involved in the improvements 13.Establish quality councils 14.Do it all over again. 	<p>Juran's 10 elements of quality improvement (Juran 1999 ch. 5)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build awareness of the need and opportunity for improvement 2. Set goals for improvement 3. Organise to reach the goals 4. Provide training throughout the organization 5. Carry out projects to solve problems 6. Report progress 7. Give recognition 8. Communicate results 9. Keep score of any improvements 10. Maintain momentum by making improvement part of the processes and systems of the organisation. <p>Juran's Quality Planning Route Map (Juran 2002 and 1999 ch. 3)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify customers. 2. Determine customer needs. 3. Translate customer needs into specifications. 4. Develop product or service to meet customer needs. 5. Optimise product or service features and characteristics. 6. Develop process capabilities to produce product or service. 7. Prove process. 8. Productionise process.
<p>Deming's 14 points (Deming 2000 ch 2)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create constancy of purpose towards improvement of product and service 2. Adopt the new philosophy 3. Cease dependence on mass inspection 4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag 5. Constantly and forever improve the system of production and service 6. Institute training 7. Institute leadership 8. Drive out fear so that all may work effectively 9. Break down barriers between departments and staff 10. Eliminate slogans for staff and ask for zero defects 11. Eliminate numerical goals and management by objective 12. Remove barriers that stop staff having pride in their work, with motivational innovations such as annual ratings and merit payments 13. Institute a vigorous programme of education and self improvement for all staff 14. Take action to accomplish the transformation. 	<p>Ishikawa's (1985) 7 Critical Success Factors.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Company-wide total quality control and participation by all members of the organization. 2. Education/training in all aspects of total quality. 3. Use of quality circles to update standards and regulations 4. Quality audits by the President and Quality Council members twice a year 5. Widespread use of statistical methods and focus on problem prevention. 6. Nationwide quality control promotion activities, with the national imperative of keeping Japanese quality number one in the world. 7. Revolutionary mental attitude on the part of both management and workers towards one another and toward the customers, including welcoming complains, encouraging risks, and wide span of control <p>Ishikawa's 7 tools Ishikawa (1985) are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cause and effect diagrams 2. Check sheets 3. Control charts 4. Flowcharts 5. Histograms 6. Pareto diagrams 7. Scatter diagrams.

Table 2.1 The 4 Quality Theorists' Key Points / Components

THE EQFM MODEL

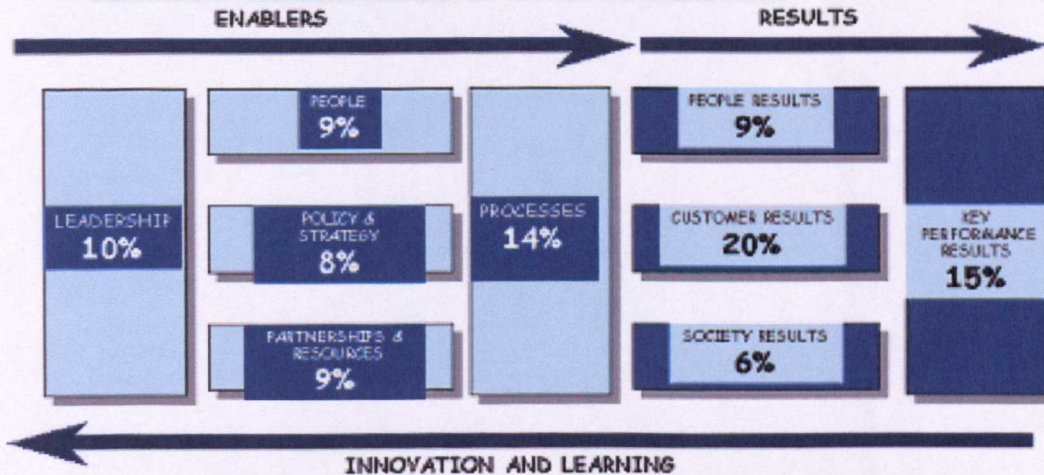
The EFQM (European Foundation Quality Model) is used by thousands of organisations throughout Europe and is the acknowledged most robust quality & excellence model in existence to-day. It contains a set of nine weighted criteria that are utilised in the assessment process. Each criterion has a set of sub-criteria, 32 in total, that form the basis for the assessment and validation tool.

The EFQM Excellence Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria. Five of these are 'Enablers' and four are 'Results'. The 'Enabler' criteria cover what an organisation does. The 'Results' criteria cover what an organisation achieves. 'Results' are caused by 'Enablers' and feedback from 'Results' help to improve 'Enablers'.

The Model is based on the premise that: Excellent results with respect to Performance, Customers, People and Society are achieved through Leadership driving Policy and Strategy, that is delivered through People Partnerships and Resources, and Processes.

Maximising business benefit from the deployment of the EFQM model is achieved and enhanced through the utilisation of an appropriate measurement system in conjunction with the EFQM model. Many members find that deploying a balanced scorecard to manage progress in achievement of performance improvement initiatives accelerates and consolidates progress.

Source: <http://www.efqm.org>



The

model and assessment process empowers all areas of the organisation to effect real and value adding evolutionary change that delivers sustainable and demonstrable benefit for all stakeholders.

1 & 3. Leadership Policy & Strategy & Constancy of Purpose - Excellence is visionary and inspirational leadership coupled with constancy of purpose

2 & 7. People Development & Involvement - Excellence is maximising the contribution of employees through their development and involvement. Continuous Learning, Innovation & Improvement - Excellence is challenging the status quo and effecting change by using learning to create innovation and improvement opportunities.

4. Partnership Development - Excellence is developing and maintaining value-adding partnerships.

5. Management by Processes & Facts - Excellence is managing the organisation through a set of interdependent and interrelated systems, processes and facts.

6. Customer Focus - Excellence is creating sustainable customer value

8. Corporate Social Responsibility - Excellence is exceeding the minimum regulatory framework in which the organisation operates and to strive to understand and respond to the expectations of their stakeholders in society

9. Results Orientation - Excellence is achieving results that delight all the organisation's stakeholders.

Source <http://www.eiga.com/products/quality/model/index.asp>

WOOD MACHINIST

Q1 Which school are you enrolled in?

Jobless	100.0%
Jobless	
Admin	
Business	
Social Science	
Applied Science	
Build Eng	
Informatics	

Lough Neagh Institute will continue to make qualitative learning and development opportunities available to individuals and groups in the local and wider Northern Ireland geographical areas, as it builds on its reputation as a major facilitator and catalyst for change in economic and community development.

Q2 Are you

15-19	84.8%
20+	15.4%
Full Time	0.0%
Part Time	0.0%

Q3 What are your reasons for studying?

Work related/Sponsored	78.9%
Leisure	7.7%
Progress to higher education	7.7%
Other - Please Specify	15.4%

Q4 What factors have impacted on your attendance?

Financial	15.4%
Personal	38.5%
Guidance	53.8%
Organisational e.g. timetables etc.	7.7%
Other - Please Specify	15.4%

Q5 During your induction week advice was given in each of the following areas. How good was this advice?

Code

1 = poor 2 = fair 3 = good 4 = excellent 5 = excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
Choice of course	0.0%	7.7%	48.2%	23.1%	23.1%
Content of course	0.0%	0.0%	38.9%	38.5%	23.1%
Cost	0.0%	0.0%	38.9%	23.1%	30.8%
Timetable	0.0%	7.7%	61.8%	30.6%	0.0%
Support	0.0%	0.0%	48.2%	38.5%	7.7%
Other - Please Specify		0.0%			

Q6 Was the course programme the correct one for you? Please comment.

15.4%

Q7 How often did you have contact with your tutor?

Monthly	15.4%
Termly	0.0%
Weekly	0.0%
Daily	0.0%
Other	0.0%

How often did you have contact with your L...

Other please comment	78.9%
----------------------	-------

WOOD MACHINIST

Q1 Which school are you enrolled in?

Jobskills Wood machining	100.0%
Jobskills Plumbing	0.0%
Administration/Education	0.0%
Business & Leisure	0.0%
Social Science	0.0%
Applied Science	0.0%
Built Environment	0.0%
Informatics & Design	0.0%

Q2 Are you

16-19	84.6%
20+	15.4%
Full Time	0.0%
Part Time	0.0%

Q3 What are your reasons for attending?

Work related/Sponsored	76.9%
Leisure	7.7%
Progress to higher education	7.7%
Other - Please Specify	15.4%

Q4 What factors have impacted on your attendance?

Financial	15.4%
Personal	38.5%
Guidance	53.8%
Organisational e.g. Timetables etc.	7.7%
Other - Please Specify	15.4%

Q5 During your induction week advice was given in each of the following areas. How good was this advice?

Code

1 = poorup to..... 5 = excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
Choice of course	0.0%	7.7%	46.2%	23.1%	23.1%
Content of course	0.0%	0.0%	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%
Career	0.0%	0.0%	38.5%	23.1%	30.8%
Timetable	0.0%	7.7%	61.5%	30.8%	0.0%
Support	0.0%	0.0%	46.2%	38.5%	7.7%
Other - Please Specify		0.0%			

Q6 Was the course/programme the correct one for you? Please comment.

84.6%

Q7 How often did you have contact with your tutor?

	Monthly	Termly	Every six months	Yearly
How often did you have contact with your t...	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other please comment	76.9%			

Q8 Please estimate how useful / effective the contact was by ticking one box,

	1	2	3	4	5
1=poor	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	23.1%	38.5%
5=excellent					

Q9 Were you given added study support to assist studies

yes

no

Please comment

Q10 If the answer to question 9 is yes, please tick in which of these areas you were given study support and please estimate how useful / effective it was by ticking one box 1=poor, 5=excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
ICT	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	7.7%	0.0%
Communication	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	15.4%	7.7%
Numeracy	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	7.7%	7.7%
Basic Skills	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%
Other - Please State which area	0.0%				

Q11 Please estimate how good the quality of teaching was

1=poor 5=excellent

Q12 How useful were the ISLA forms in setting and monitoring targets

1=poor 5=excellent

Please Comment

Q13 How useful was the appraisal process (the ISLA forms) in providing a quality education for you?

1=poor 5=excellent

Please Comment

Q14 What can the institute do to improve support and guidance (please comment below)

Q15 Please feel free to add any further comments

Plumbers

Q1 Which school are you enrolled in?

<i>Jobskills Wood machining</i>	0.0%
<i>Jobskills Plumbing</i>	100.0%
<i>Administration/Education</i>	0.0%
<i>Business & Leisure</i>	0.0%
<i>Social Science</i>	0.0%
<i>Applied Science</i>	0.0%
<i>Built Environment</i>	0.0%
<i>Informatics & Design</i>	0.0%

Q2 Are you

<i>16-19</i>	91.7%
<i>20+</i>	8.3%
<i>Full Time</i>	8.3%
<i>Part Time</i>	0.0%

Q3 What are your reasons for attending?

<i>Work related/Sponsored</i>	91.7%
<i>Leisure</i>	0.0%
<i>Progress to higher education</i>	0.0%
<i>Other - Please Specify</i>	0.0%

Q4 What factors have impacted on your attendance?

<i>Financial</i>	33.3%
<i>Personal</i>	8.3%
<i>Guidance</i>	58.3%
<i>Organisational e.g. Timetables etc.</i>	0.0%
<i>Other - Please Specify</i>	0.0%

Q5 During your induction week advice was given in each of the following areas. How good was this advice?

Code 1 = poorup to..... 5 = excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Choice of course</i>	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	25.0%	50.0%
<i>Content of course</i>	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	50.0%	25.0%
<i>Career</i>	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	25.0%	41.7%
<i>Timetable</i>	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	8.3%	41.7%
<i>Support</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	58.3%
<i>Other - Please Specify</i>	0.0%				

Q6 Was the course/programme the correct one for you? Please comment.

100.0%

Q7 How often did you have contact with your tutor?

	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Termly</i>	<i>Every six months</i>	<i>Yearly</i>
<i>How often did you have contact with your t...</i>	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>Other please comment</i>	8.3%			

Q8 Please estimate how useful / effective the contact was by ticking one box,

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>1=poor 5=excellent</i>	8.3%	0.0%	8.3%	33.3%	25.0%

Q9 Were you given added study support to assist studies

yes

no

Q10 If the answer to question 9 is yes, please tick in which of these areas you were given study support and please estimate how useful / effective it was by ticking one box 1=poor, 5= excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
ICT	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
Communication	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	8.3%
Numeracy	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
Basic Skills	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	25.0%
Other - Please State which area	0.0%				

Q11 Please estimate how good the quality of teaching was

	1	2	3	4	5
1=poor 5=excellent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	58.3%
Please Comment	0.0%				

Q12 How useful were the ISLA forms in setting and monitoring targets

	1	2	3	4	5
1=poor 5=excellent	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Please Comment	0.0%				

Q13 How useful was the appraisal process (the ISLA forms) in providing a quality education for you?

	1	2	3	4	5
1=poor 5=excellent	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	8.3%
Please Comment	0.0%				

Q14 What can the institute do to improve support and guidance (please comment below)
0.0%

Q15 Please feel free to add any further comments
16.7%

APPENDIX 3.1 Explanatory Letters

Dear Colleague,

I am conducting a survey to analyse staff opinion on the subject of retention in our college as part of my doctoral thesis and write to ask for permission to proceed with an interview with you. This should take no more than 35-40 minutes of your time. My research is intended to contribute to improving student retention at LNIFHE. The interview process will be entirely confidential, no names will be attached to the form and your responses will not be seen by anyone else at the college. I would therefore appeal for comprehensive and honest answers. The same questions and phraseology will be used for the other members of staff who participate (five in all, one from each school) so as not to compromise validity or reliability. I will take notes of your responses for you to check before I type them up. You will then be given the final written version of the interview to check and alter anything you wish. I do hope you will agree to this request.

I will conduct the interviews with you and other colleagues on Friday 4th, 11th and 18th February 2005 between 1300 and 1400 hours (subject to agreement) at suitable times to be arranged. Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours Sincerely

Dear Parent,

A mathematics tutor in LNIFHE; I am conducting a survey to analyse student opinion on the subject of student retention in our college as part of my doctoral thesis. I write to ask for permission to proceed with an interview with your son/daughter (please see copy enclosed). This should take no more than 35-40 minutes of his/her time. My research is intended to contribute to improving student retention at LNIFHE. The interview process will be entirely confidential no names will be attached to the form and your responses will not be seen by anyone else at the college. I would therefore hope to receive comprehensive and honest answers. The same questions and wording style will be used for the other students who participate (20 in all, 4 from each of our 5 schools). I will take notes of your son/daughter's responses for him/her to check before I type them up. He/she will then be given the final written version of the interview to check and alter anything that may not be correct. I do hope you will agree to this request.

If you are in agreement with this proposal, I will conduct the interviews with your son/daughter during the months of February and March 2005 at suitable times to be arranged between him/her and myself.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours Sincerely

APPENDIX 3.2 Questionnaire for Students on Retention

This survey is concerned with the reasons for poor and good attendance among students. Although the answers will apply to your own attendance, you will not put your name on this form. The survey will therefore be confidential, so please give honest answers! Please tick boxes to answer each question and give any comments on these answers that you feel are important in the box on the next page. Please ask if you want me to explain the meaning of any questions.

If you want to comment further when answering a question, please put the number of the question and your comment in the 'Comment Box' at the end of the next page.

1. Which school are you enrolled in?

Jobskills (training) ☐

Admin. And Education ☐

Business and Leisure ☐

Social Science ☐

Applied Science ☐

Built Environment ☐

Informatics and Design ☐

2. Are you (a) 16 – 19 ☐

20+ ☐

(b) Full time ☐

Part

time ☐

3. What are your reasons for attending?

Work related / sponsored ☐

Leisure ☐

Progress to Higher Education ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

1. Regarding your attendance, which of the factors below have helped it or made it difficult? Please tick the box or boxes which apply using the grid below

1 = helped it a lot, 2 = helped a little, 3 = no influence at all, 4 = made it a little difficult, 5 = made it very difficult

Financial (e.g. are course fees or travelling costs too expensive or do you work part-time?),

• Helped it a lot ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Made it very difficult
1 2 3 4 5

Personal (e.g. do you have enough time to study at home or do you have too far to travel?)

• Helped it a lot ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Made it very difficult
1 2 3 4 5

Support from this College (e.g. are you happy with learning support or careers advice?)

• Helped it a lot ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Made it very difficult
1 2 3 4 5

Organisational (e.g. have you got a suitable timetable are the rooms clean or do you know who to go to or where to go for help?)

• Helped it a lot ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Made it very difficult
1 2 3 4 5

Others? Please specify

• Helped it a lot ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Made it very difficult
1 2 3 4 5

If necessary, please comment fully here.

5. **During your induction week advice was given in some of the following areas. How good was this advice? If no advice was given in an area, please tick 'none'.**

• <u>Choice of course</u>	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6
• <u>Course Content</u>	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6
• <u>Career</u>	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6
• <u>Timetable</u>	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6
• <u>Financial Support</u>	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6
• <u>Study Support</u>	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6
• <u>Other</u> (please specify)	Poor ←	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	→Excellent	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
		1	2	3	4	5			6

6. **Is your chosen course / programme the correct one for you - Yes ☐ or no ☐? Any Comment?**

7. **How often do you have individual contact with your tutor where you can have a private discussion?**

Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Monthly ☐ Each term ☐ Twice a year ☐ Yearly ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

8. **Regarding the discussions with your tutor, please estimate how useful was the advice/feedback which you received by ticking one box,**

Poor ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ →Excellent
1 2 3 4 5

If you would like to add a comment, please do so here.

9. **Have you been given added study support to assist studies Yes ☐ or no ☐?**

10. If the answer is yes, please tick in which of these areas you have been given study support and please estimate how useful / effective it is by ticking one box.

ICT

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

Communication

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

Numeracy

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

Basic Skills

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

Other

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

If other, please state which area(s) here.....

11. Please estimate how good the quality of teaching on your course (as a whole) is by ticking one box (please feel free to comment in the Comment box),

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

12. By choosing from the table below, please state what interests or motivates you about your studies or experience at this college. You can state the letter a, b, c,.....etc. in the box and give at least three answers ranked 1 = most important 2 = next 'most important'....etc).

1

2

3

4

5

a. Course design b. Suitable timetable c. Good teaching d. Good tutor support and advice e. Meeting your targets as set by your tutor f. Support from your fellow students g. Good career advice	h. Prizes and ceremonies i. Student learning contracts (ISLA) j. Parental involvement k. Disciplinary procedures l. Good college atmosphere
--	---

13. How useful were the ISLA forms in setting and monitoring your targets for the year so far? Please comment in the Comment Box below.

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

14. How useful has the ISLA process been so far in helping you progress/succeed in your course?

Poor

←

→

Excellent

1

2

3

4

5

Please comment in the Comment Box below.

15 What can the institute do to improve student support and guidance (please comment here)

16 Any other comments? - Please use comment Box below

What are/were your reasons for attending this college?

Regarding your attendance, which factors have helped & which made it difficult? Please rank the four (4) most positively which had the most positive influence and the four which had the most negative influence using the table below

Positive Influence	Negative Influence
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

If necessary, please attach full text

Many thanks for your help in completing this form.

APPENDIX 3.3 Interview Schedule for Current Students

I will remind respondents about the confidentiality of this process and appeal for honest answers. The students will be reminded of the nature & purpose of this survey, my role of researcher as opposed to a tutor and thanked for their participation.

1. What are/were your reasons for attending this college?

2. Regarding your attendance, which factors have helped it and which made it difficult? Please rank the four (1=most important) which had the most positive influence and the four which had the most negative influence using the table below

Positive Influences	Negative Influences
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

If necessary, please comment fully here.

3. How useful was the advice and guidance which you received during induction (at the start of the year)?

	Comment
a) Choice of course	
b) Content of course	
c) Careers advice	
d) Timetable	
e) Financial support/advice	
f) Study/ learning support	
g) Knowing where to go or who to go to for help.	
h) Others	

4. **How useful or effective (in keeping you on the course) was the support and guidance which you received during the year?**

	Comment
a) Learning support	
b) Careers / advice	
c) Financial advice	
d) Contact with your tutor	
e) Other	

5. **How influential was quality of teaching (in the course programme) in keeping you on the course? Please tick the box or boxes which apply using the grid below**

1 = helped it a lot, 2 = helped a little, 3 = no influence at all, 4 = made it a little difficult, 5 = made it very difficult

• Helped it ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Made it difficult
1 2 3 4 5

If necessary, please comment fully here.

6. **How good is/was the quality of teaching (on your course programme) that you receive/received?**

Poor ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Excellent
1 2 3 4 5

7. How useful was the ISLA process in helping you progress/succeed in your course?

Poor ← ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ → Excellent

 1 2 3 4 5

If necessary, please comment here.

8. What motivates you to stay at this college?

9. Any other comments you would like to add on what keeps you on your course and how the college can help you to do so?

Many thanks for your help.

I will remind respondents about the confidentiality of this process and appeal for honest answers. The participants will be reminded of the nature and purpose of this survey and thanked for their participation.

- 1. What personal performance indicators do you use in your teaching practice?**
For example students' attentiveness/concentration in class or their success in homeworks / class tests etc. Please list and rank 4 of them (1 = most important).

1

2

3

4

- 2. When judging your performance, using these indicators, do you adjust your teaching practice? If so, please indicate how for each of the 4 indicators which you have supplied.**

1

2

3

4

- 3. In your view, what are the most influential factors which impact on student retention? – Please give 4 factors in rank order of importance (1 = most influential).**

Positive Factors	Negative Factors
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

4. Why is each of these factors so important?

Positive Influence	Negative Influence
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

5. What motivates you to perform your normal duties and what you do to maintain your own motivation?

6. Please explain in what way staff motivation could be influential on student retention.

7. How is guidance and support managed during induction at the organisational and school levels? - Please describe the operation of this management process as you understand it at each of the two levels – i.e. how is it actually to be done according to LNIFHE policy)?

- **At Organisational Level**

- **At School Level**

8. How is guidance and support managed during induction at the course co-ordinators' level? I.e. how, (for your course programme in particular) is this process actually performed now (i.e. how is it done in practice at this level)?

9. How is guidance and support managed throughout the year at the organisational and school levels? - Please describe the operation of this management process as you understand it at each of the two levels – i.e. how is it meant to be done by policy)?

- **At Organisational Level**

- **At School Level**

10. How is guidance and support managed throughout the year at the course co-ordinators' level? I.e. how, (for your course programme in particular) is this process actually performed (i.e. how is it done in practice at this level now)?

11. How effective (with reasons) is the present advice, guidance & support process (for the student) in relation to student retention?

- **At Organisational Level (i.e. policy)**

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

- **At School Level (i.e. policy)**

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

- **At Course Co-ordinators' Level (i.e. practice)**

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

12. *How can the advice, guidance & support process be improved in the future*
(i.e. How should it happen)?

• *At Organisational Level (i.e. policy)*

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

• *At School Level (i.e. policy)*

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

• *At Course Co-ordinators' Level (i.e. practice)*

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

13. **What features of the Quality Control and Quality Assurance processes are influential in relation to retention? If you feel that there are either no negative (or positive) influences please state 'None' in the relevant place below. If you do feel that some processes are positive (or negative) influences, please rank them and give reasons below.**

Quality Control -for example, (internally) appraisals, departmental reviews, assessment of students and measuring targets or (externally) mechanisms such as inspections and examination results.	Quality Assurance for example, Self evaluating, benchmarking (comparing), setting (and meeting) targets for students and improving our practice (through e.g. IQ:RS)
Positive Influences (if none state here.....) 1 2 3 4	Positive Influences (if none state here.....) 1 2 3 4
Negative Influences (if none state here.....) 1 2 3 4	Negative Influences (if none state here.....) 1 2 3 4

14. **How are these QA and QC processes managed now?**

- **At Organisational Level**

- **At School Level**

- **At your Personal (i.e. co-ordinator) Level**

15. **What, in your view motivates students to stay at this college? Choose 5 from the box below and please rank (1 = most important down to 5) the factors that you feel are important and comment if necessary afterwards.**

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Curriculum design and developing programmes to help students with e.g. time management, organisation, independent study, working with others, examination techniques, overcoming examination anxiety. | d) Peer support and/or Mentoring |
| b) Quality teaching | e) Good careers guidance |
| c) Effective tutoring | f) Prizes and ceremonies |
| | g) Student learning contracts |
| | h) Parental involvement |
| | i) Disciplinary procedures |
| | j) Monitoring/Tracking and following up on attendance |

1

2

3

4

5

Any others?.....

16. **What strategies are employed by LNIFHE to maximise retention?**

17. What strategies should be employed by LNIFHE to maximise retention? Give 4 suggestions in rank order of importance and comment (1 = most important).

1

2

3

4

18. When conducting the ISLA process, do you set and monitor targets?

Yes ☐ **No** ☐

19. If yes, which targets are set and how are they monitored?

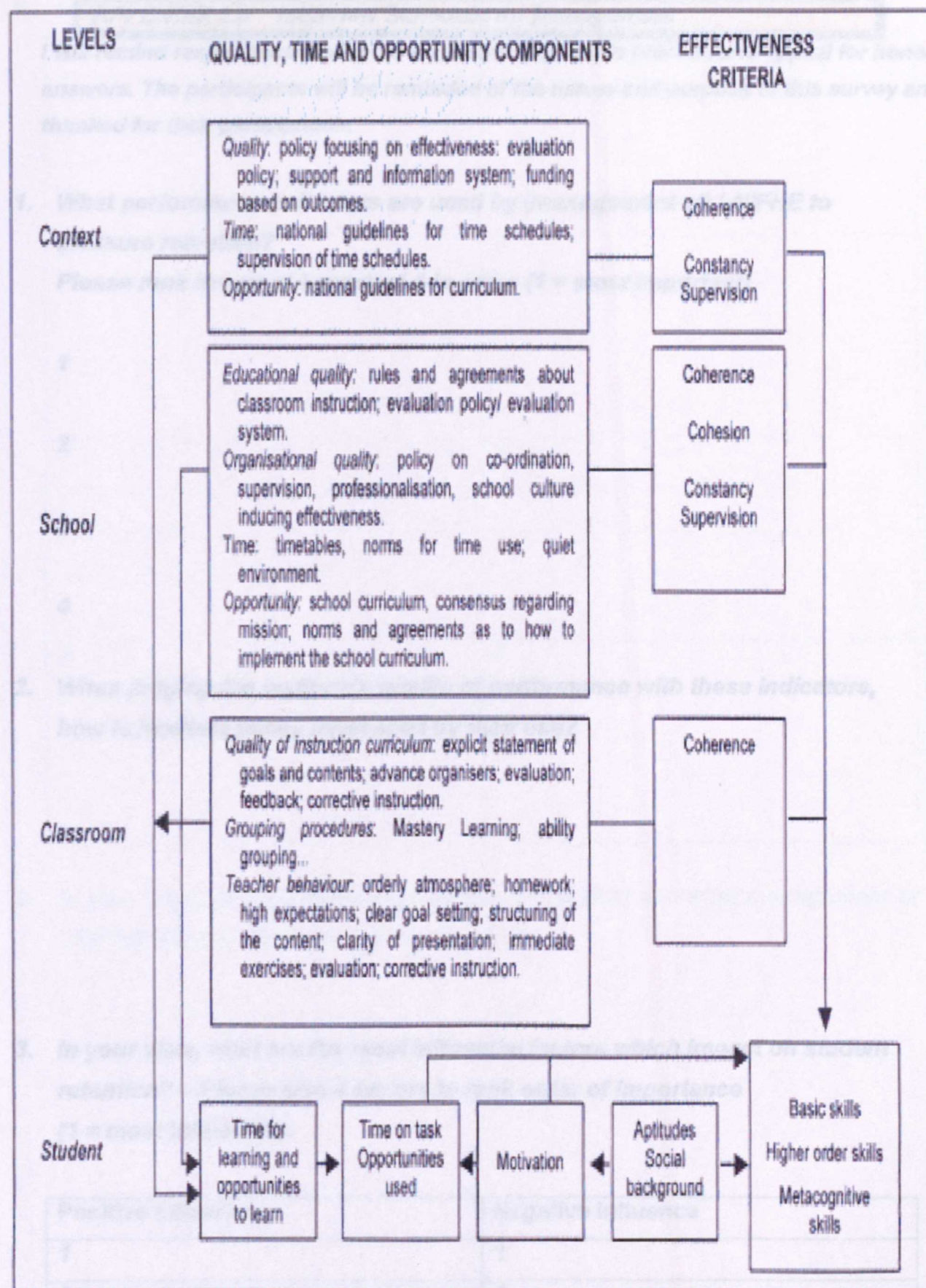
Targets	Comment

20. How do you see your role during induction and how could it be improved (to aid retention)?

21. How do you define then deal with poor attendance in your tutor group?

22. Any other comments you would like to add on student retention, how it is managed and how it can be improved?

23. Finally! please look at the following model (Creemer's Model) – do you think that LNIFHE adheres closely to this model?- please give any reasons to support your view.



APPENDIX 3.5 Interview Schedule for Management

I will remind respondents about the confidentiality of this process and appeal for honest answers. The participants will be reminded of the nature and purpose of this survey and thanked for their participation.

1. **What performance indicators are used by (management at) LNIFHE to measure retention?**

Please rank the most important 4 in order (1 = most important)

1

2

3

4

2. **When judging the institute's quality of performance with these indicators, how is institute policy influenced by their use?**

5. *In your view, what motivates teaching/storing staff and what management at LNIFHE does to maintain staff motivation?*

3. **In your view, what are the most influential factors which impact on student retention? – Please give 4 factors in rank order of importance (1 = most influential).**

Positive Influence	Negative Influence
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

4. *Why are these factors so important?*

Positive Influence	Negative Influence
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

5. *In your view, what motivates teaching/tutoring staff and what management at LNIFHE does to maintain staff motivation?*

6. Please explain in what way staff motivation could be influential on student retention.

7. How is guidance and support managed during induction at the organisational & school levels? - Please describe the operation of this management process as you understand it – i.e. how is it meant done according to LNIFHE policy)?

8. How is guidance and support managed during induction at course co-ordinators' (tutors') level (i.e. how is it actually done in practice at this Level)?

9. How is guidance and support managed throughout the year at the organisational & school levels? - Please describe the operation of this management process as you understand it at each of the two levels – i.e. how is it meant done according to LNIFHE policy)?

10. How is guidance and support managed throughout the year at course co-ordinators' (tutors') level (i.e. how is it actually done in practice at this Level)?

11. How effective (with reasons) is the advice, guidance & support process (for the student) in relation to optimising student retention?

- **At Managerial (Organisational/ School) Level (i.e. policy)**

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

- **At Course Co-ordinators' (Tutors') Level (i.e. practice)**

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

12. *How can the management of the advice, guidance & support process be improved in the future?*

- *At Managerial (Organisational/ School) Level (i.e. policy)*

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

- *At Course Coordinators' (Tutors') Level (i.e. practice)*

<i>At induction</i>	<i>Throughout the year</i>

13. What features of the Quality Control and Quality Assurance processes are influential in relation to retention? Please rank them and give reasons

Quality Control	Quality Assurance
Positive Influences 1 2 3 4	Positive Influences 1 2 3 4
Negative Influences 1 2 3 4	Negative Influences 1 2 3 4

14. How are the QC and QA processes managed at present?

- **At Managerial (Organisational & School) Level**

- **At the Course Co-ordinators' (Tutors') Level**

15. **What, in your view motivates students to stay at this college? Choose 5 from the box below and please rank (1 = most important down to 5) the factors that you feel are important and comment if necessary afterwards.**
- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Curriculum design and developing programmes to help students with e.g. time management, organisation, independent study, working with others, examination techniques, overcoming examination anxiety. | d) Peer support and/or Mentoring |
| b) Quality teaching | e) Good careers guidance |
| c) Effective tutoring | f) Prizes and ceremonies |
| | g) Student learning contracts |
| | h) Parental involvement |
| | i) Disciplinary procedures |
| | j) Monitoring/Tracking and following up on attendance |

1

2

3

4

5

Any others?.....

16. **What strategies are employed by management at LNIFHE to improve retention rates?**

1

2

3

4

17. **What strategies should be employed by LNIFHE to maximise retention? Give 4 suggestions in rank order of importance and comment (1 = most important).**

1

2

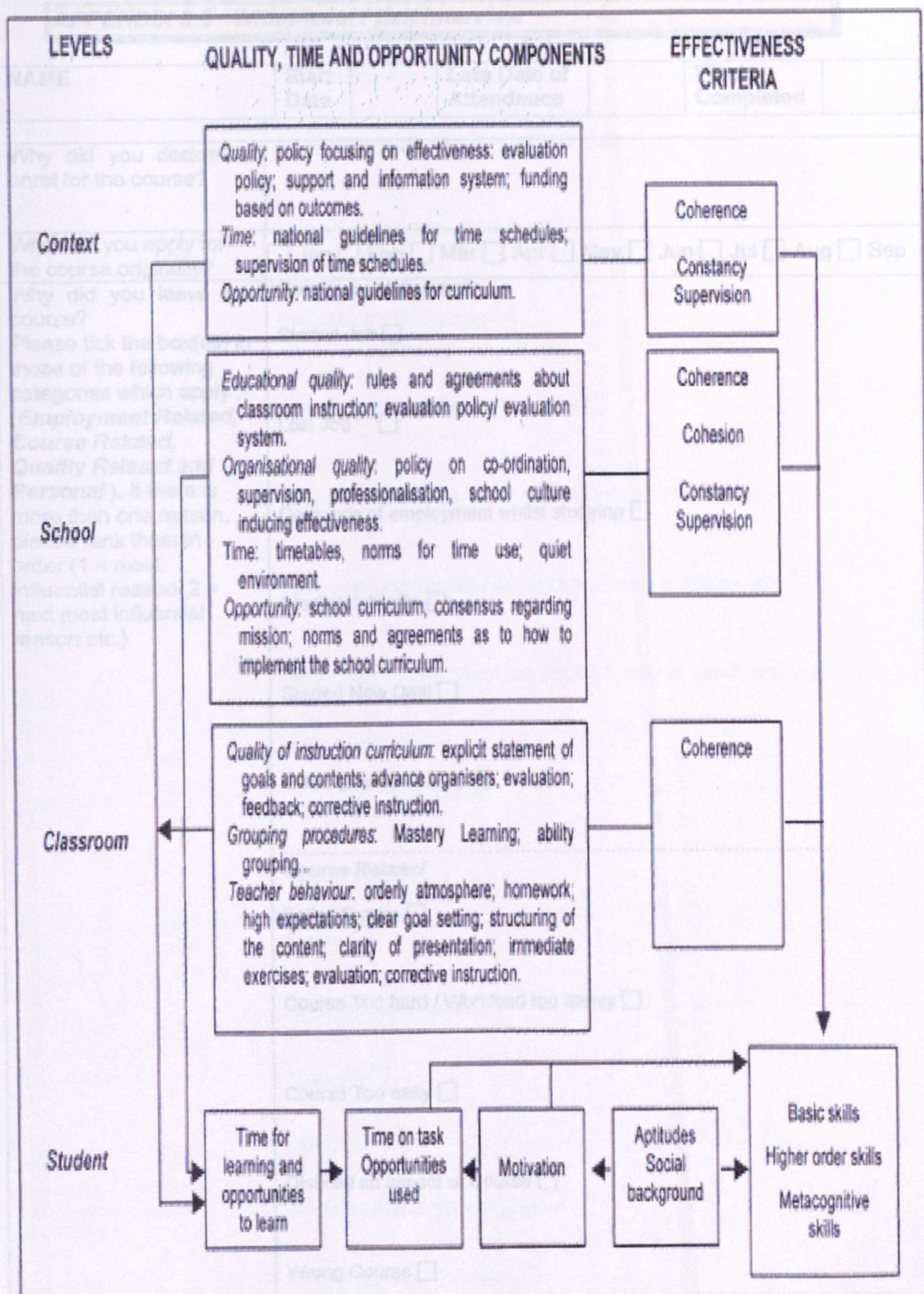
3

4

18. How do you view the role of the course co-ordinator/ tutor during induction and how could it be improved (to aid retention)?

19. How do you view the role of the course co-ordinator/ tutor during academic year and how could it be improved (to aid retention)?

20. Finally! please look at the following model (Creemer's Model) – do you think it applies to LNIFHE? and please give any reasons you can to substantiate this.



APPENDIX 3.6 Withdrawal / Exit Interview

NAME	Start Date	Late Date of Attendance	Weeks Completed
Why did you decide to enrol for the course?			
When do you apply for the course originally?	<input type="checkbox"/> Jan <input type="checkbox"/> Feb <input type="checkbox"/> Mar <input type="checkbox"/> Apr <input type="checkbox"/> May <input type="checkbox"/> Jun <input type="checkbox"/> Jul <input type="checkbox"/> Aug <input type="checkbox"/> Sep		
Why did you leave the course? Please tick the box(es) in those of the following categories which apply ; - (Employment Related, Course Related, Quality Related and Personal) . If there is more than one reason, please rank them in order (1 = most influential reason, 2 = next most influential reason etc.)	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding-bottom: 5px;"> Employment Related Started Job <input type="checkbox"/> Lost Job <input type="checkbox"/> Demands of employment whilst studying <input type="checkbox"/> Started Jobskills <input type="checkbox"/> Started New Deal <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please define) <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding-bottom: 5px;"> Course Related Failed Exams <input type="checkbox"/> Course Too hard / Workload too heavy <input type="checkbox"/> Course Too easy <input type="checkbox"/> Disliked an aspect of Course <input type="checkbox"/> Wrong Course <input type="checkbox"/> Other (define) <input type="checkbox"/> </div>		

.....
Quality Related

Poor quality of teaching ☐

Initial inadequate advice on course choice ☐

Inadequate induction process ☐

Inadequate learning support ☐

Lack of personal support from staff ☐

Inadequate guidance throughout the rest of the course ☐

Inadequate organisation (timetabling/resources/rooms etc.) ☐

Inadequate appraisal process (ISLAs & student questionnaires) ☐

Other (define) ☐

.....
Personal

Travel problems ☐

Family ☐

Needs of dependants ☐

Financial ☐

Illness ☐

Stress related to the programme ☐

Not feeling 'part of system' ☐

Other (please define) ☐

<p>Please elaborate on the replies to the above section under these headings. Please give your views on the effectiveness of: -</p> <p>a) The procedures for guidance and support.</p> <p>b) The procedures for ensuring a quality education for you.</p>	<p><i>Comments</i></p>
<p>About The Course</p>	<p><i>List Briefly state three good things about the course</i></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<p>Generally, did you discuss the decision with your tutor or anyone else and, if so, what help/advice were you given?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Comments</i></p>
<p>Did you have difficulty in finding out where to go for advice?</p>	<p><i>Comments</i></p>
<p>Was there anything we could have done to enable you to stay?</p>	<p><i>Comments</i></p>
<p>Would or did you consider transferring to another course, give details?</p>	<p><i>Comments</i></p>
<p>Would you consider taking another course at the institute at some future date?</p>	<p><i>Comments</i></p>

What are your plans now?	<i>Comments</i>		
Would you like to receive any advice or guidance now?	<i>Comments</i>		
Is there anything else you would like to add?	<i>Comments</i>		
Signed (Tutor)		Date	
Signed (Student)		Date	

Thank you for your participation in this interview

Appendix 3.7 'Representative' Classes and Selected Students

Class Type Part or Full time & duration	School	Number in Class as of Start of 2 nd Week in Sept	Numbers Returning Questionnaires	Max number of days attendance up To Jan1	Actual Attendance Up to Jan1	Percentage = Actual/Possible Then X 100	Number of withdrawals
'A' Level Politics Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Social Science	14	13 (out of 14 still in class)	45	Student A Student B Student C Student D	100 100 80 78	None
AVCE ICT Full-time Year 1 Group 1A (2 year course)	Informatics & Design	17	13 (out of 13 still in class)	14	Student A Student B Student C Student D	93 93 64 64	2 *2 others left after 'taster week'
'A' Level Chemistry Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Applied Science	12	12 (out of 12 still in class)	45	Student A Student B Student C Student D	98 98 66 64	none
OCR Certificate in Administration Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Administratio & Education	10	9 (out of 9 still in class)	45	Student A Student B Student C Student D	100 98 53 36	1
NVQ Plastering Full Time Year 1 (2 year course)	Built Environment	12	9 (out of 10 still in class)	30	Student A Student B Student C Student D	100 100 80 78	2
NVQ Hairdressing level 2 – year 1 (2 year course)	Business & Leisure	14	13 (out of 13 still in class)	30	Student A Student B Student C Student D	90 90 67 45	1

Appendix 3.8 Types of data to be noted when transcribing interviews

- What was being said;
- The tone of the voice of the speaker(s) (e.g. harsh, kindly, encouraging);
- The inflection of the voice (e.g. rising or falling, a question or a statement, a cadence or a pause, a summarizing or exploratory tone, opening or closing a line of inquiry);
- Emphases placed by the speaker;
- Pauses (short or long) and silences (short to long);
- Interruptions
- The mood of the speaker(s) (e.g. excited, angry, resigned, bored, enthusiastic, committed, happy, grudging);
- The speed of the talk (fast to slow, hurried or unhurried, hesitant to confident);
- How many people were speaking simultaneously;
- Whether a speaker was speaking continuously or in short phrases;
- Who is speaking to whom;
- Indecipherable speech;
- Any other events that were taking place at the same time that the researcher can recall.

Source:- Cohen et. al. (2001) p. 282

	STUDENT SERVICES/CURRICULUM
1	At Risk Monitoring Procedures
2	ABE Policy Statement
3	Admission Policy
4	BTEC Examinations Ed Excel
5	Child Protection Policy and Guidelines
6	Communicable Diseases Policy
7	Curriculum Audit Procedures
8	Curriculum Policy
9	Development Plan for Higher Education
10	Disability Statement
11	Education (Student Support)NI Order 1998
12	Educational Visits Policy
13	Enrolment Procedures - FT, PT, HE Students
14	Enrolment of Students under 16 years Policy
15	Examination and Assessment Procedures
16	Examination Rules for Candidates
17	GNVQ Grading Appeals Procedure Internal
18	GNVQ Policy
19	Group Safety at Water Margins
20	Guidelines on the Administration of Controlled Drugs
21	HIV/Aids Policy
22	Internet Use Policy
23	Issue and Return of Registers
24	IT Curriculum Policy
25	IT Policy
26	Learning Centre Policy
27	Link Provision Policy
28	Marketing Policy
29	NVQ Policy
30	Part time Student Entitlements
31	Quality Policy
32	Residential Guidelines and Procedures
33	RTO Policies
34	Special Needs (Abuse) Procedures
35	Student Counselling Policy
36	Student Discipline Policy
37	Student Drugs Education Policy
38	Student Guidance Policy
39	Student Learner Agreement
40	Student Support Procedures-FT/PT/HE Financial
41	Student/Customer Complaints Policy and Procedure
42	Submission of Assignments
43	Timetabling Procedures
44	Withdrawal policy and Procedures for FT/PT Students
45	Word Processing Examinations Policy
46	Work Experience
47	Work Experience Guidelines for Employers

	HUMAN RESOURCES/HEALTH AND SAFETY
48	Additional Hours/post-Corporate Services Staff
49	Advertising Posts
50	Annual Leave Corporate Services Staff
51	Associate Lecturer Procedure
52	Completion and Return of Monthly Salary Returns-Lecturers
53	Contagious Diseases
54	Corporate Services Staff-Additional Hours
55	Criminal Record Check
56	Disciplinary Procedures-Corporate Services Staff
57	Drugs Policy Statement
58	Equal Opportunities - General
59	Equality of Opportunity in Employment-Policy Statement
60	Health and Safety Policy Statement
61	Industrial Relations Policy
62	Joint Harassment Policy
63	Lecturer Absence
64	Managing Capability Non-Teaching Staff
65	Procedure for the Provision of Unpaid Work Placement
66	Procedures for ensuring Health and Safety of Students
67	Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures
68	Sickness Absence Management Policy
69	Staff Absence - Reporting Ill Health
70	Staff Development Policy
71	Staff Request Form
72	Staff Welfare Policy
73	Standardisation of Recruitment Qualification
74	Welfare Counselling Policy

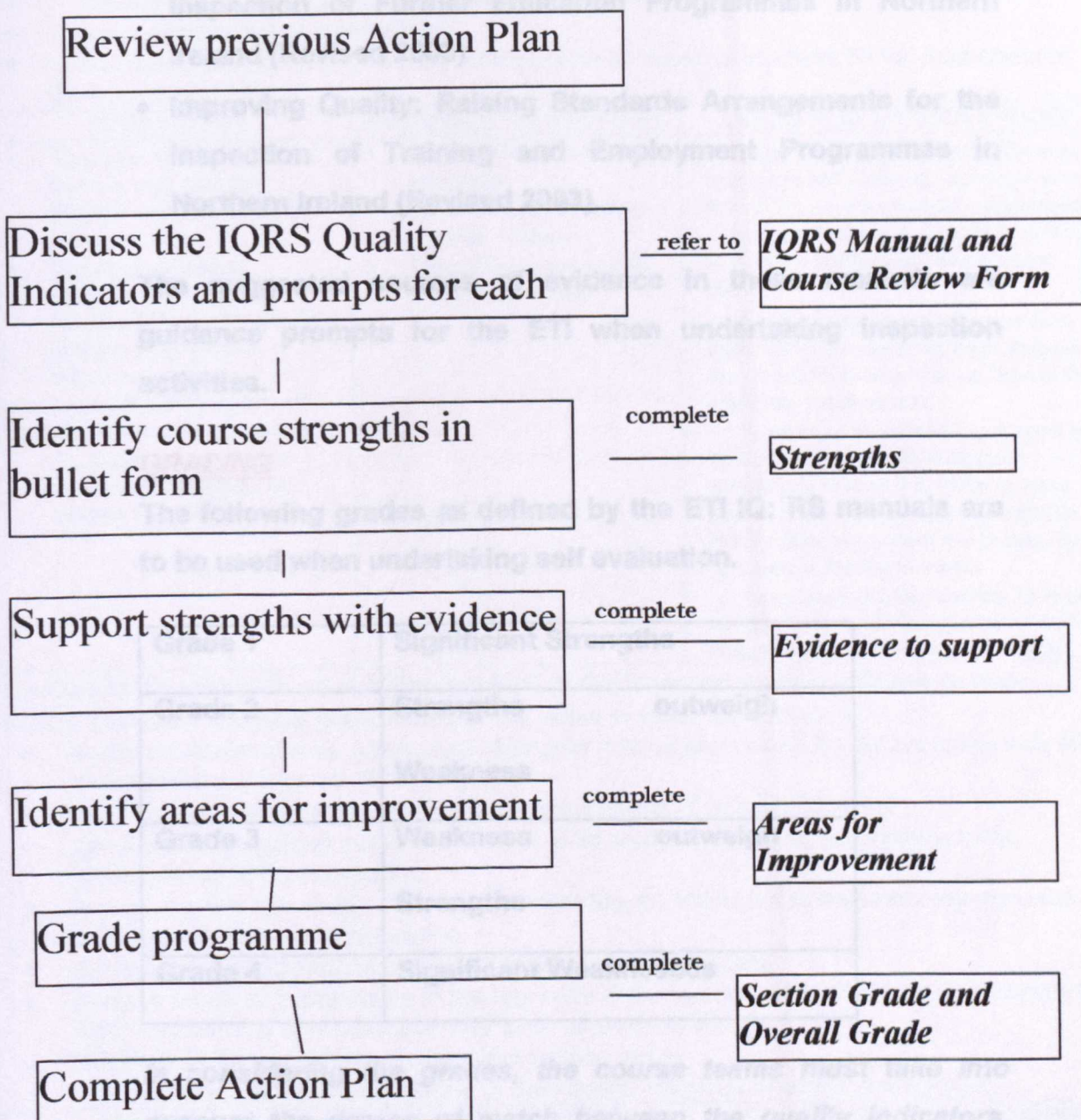
	ESTATES / FINANCES
75	All Tender Documents
76	Borrowing Institute Property Policy / Procedure
77	Charitable Donations
78	Classroom Security / Risk Assessment Procedures
79	Criteria for the Selection of Contractors for Building Work
80	Dealing with Bomb Warnings
81	Disposal of Property Procedures
82	Drivers Register Application
83	Emergencies Business Continuity Plan
84	Emergency Evacuation Procedures
85	Energy Efficiency Policy
86	Environment Policy
87	Fees Policy
88	Finance Year Plan
89	Financial Procedures
90	Financial Regulations
91	Fraud / Misappropriation / Theft Procedures
92	Granting Use of Institute Facilities
93	Guidelines for addressing requests for Funding/Support
94	Hand Held Radio Control Units
95	Hospitality and Travel Policy
96	Improvement of Property Scheme
97	Inventory Policy and Procedures
98	Key Holding and Security Policy
99	List of Contracts held by the SEELB
100	Maintenance Defect Reporting Procedure
101	Non Bomb Emergency Evacuation
102	Policy for Unlocking Doors on Escape Routes
103	Premises Policy
104	Prioritised List of Work
105	Procedures for Paying Fees by Instalment
106	Procurement of Property Procedures
107	Salary Returns
108	Schedule of Course Fees
109	Security of Institute Buildings Procedures
110	Seeking of Sponsorship Procedures
111	Smoking Policy
112	System for Letting Property
113	Tender Documents for Professional Services
114	Transport Policy
115	Tuition Fees Remission for Students
116	Visual Display of Materials in Institute Premises Policy

	MISCELLANEOUS
117	Acceptable Use Policy
118	Administration / Communications Policy
119	Child Pornography Investigation Procedure
120	Data Protection Policy
121	Email Policy
122	Fault Log Procedure
123	Gift Policy
124	Internet
125	MIS Data Security Policy
126	MIS Disaster Recovery Plan
127	Portable Computer Security
128	Software Booking
129	Software Policy
130	Telephone Usage Policy
131	Whistle blowing Policy
132	New Policies awaiting SMT /Governing Body Approval
133	Risk Management
134	Fraud

Policy Number	<i>STUDENT SERVICES/CURRICULUM</i>	<i>Review Date</i>
1	At Risk Monitoring Procedures	
2	ABE Policy Statement	
3	Admission Policy	
4	BTEC Examinations Ed Excel	
5	Child Protection Policy and Guidelines	
7	Curriculum Audit Procedures	
8	Curriculum Policy	
9	Development Plan for Higher Education	
10	Disability Statement	
11	Education (Student Support)NI Order 1998	
12	Educational Visits Policy	
15	Examination and Assessment Procedures	
23	Issue and Return of Registers	
24	IT Curriculum Policy	
25	IT Policy	
26	Learning Centre Policy	
30	Part time Student Entitlements	
31	Quality Policy	
34	Special Needs (Abuse) Procedures	
35	Student Counselling Policy	
38	Student Guidance Policy	
39	Student Learner Agreement	
40	Student Support Procedures- Financial	
41	Student/Customer Complaints Policy	
43	Timetabling Procedures	
46	Work Experience	
47	Work Experience Guidelines for Employers	
	<i>HUMAN RESOURCES / HEALTH & SAFETY</i>	
70	Staff Development Policy	
71	Staff Request Form	
72	Staff Welfare Policy	
74	Welfare Counselling Policy	
	<i>ESTATES / FINANCES</i>	
87	Fees Policy	
88	Finance Year Plan	
93	Guidelines for requests - Funding/Support	
115	Tuition Fees Remission for Students	

Table 4.1 Retention Related Policies of LNIFHE

Course Review Cycle Process



GUIDELINES FOR COURSE TEAM SELF EVALUATION

The following documentation has been designed to help the Course Team continually self-evaluate their programme in terms of the Quality Indicators as defined by the ETI in the manuals:

- Improving Quality: Raising Standards: Arrangements for the Inspection of Further Education Programmes in Northern Ireland (Revised 2003)
- Improving Quality: Raising Standards Arrangements for the Inspection of Training and Employment Programmes in Northern Ireland (Revised 2003).

The suggested sources of evidence in these manuals are guidance prompts for the ETI when undertaking inspection activities.

GRADING

The following grades as defined by the ETI IQ: RS manuals are to be used when undertaking self evaluation.

Grade 1	Significant Strengths
Grade 2	Strengths outweigh Weakness
Grade 3	Weakness outweigh Strengths
Grade 4	Significant Weaknesses

In considering the grades, the course teams must take into account the degree of match between the quality indicators, performance indicators and actual provision. The Quality of Learning and Standards and Outcomes are of CENTRAL importance and should be reflected in the Overall Grade.

1 STANDARDS AND OUTCOMES: How well do learners achieve?**1.a STUDENT/TRAINEE RESPONSES: How successful are the learners in working independently to improve and extend their own learning?****Consider the extent to which all learners:**

- develop the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning including the capacity to work independently and collaboratively
- show motivation, work productively and make effective use of their time
- achieve high standards of time keeping and good or excellent attendance
- behave responsibly and with respect for others
- can apply their learning in an appropriate range of contexts
- make effective use of information
- demonstrate achievement at a standard beyond the minimum requirement for the programme or the level of key skills

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of students and trainees who enter the Institute can work can work independently. • In most programmes relationships are good between tutors and trainees and this contributes to effective learning. • In training, the majority of employers are supportive of the Training Organisation where additional time and support is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of initial and assessment • Feedback from workplace • Portfolio evidence • Timetabling arrangements for learning support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer working relationships between employers and Training Organisation to inform employers about the requirements of the Occupational Frameworks in order to improve learning and achievement rates. • The Training Organisation needs to make better provision for those trainees who are capable of achieving beyond the minimum requirements. • Increase levels of learning support in vocational and key skills classes, particularly at level 2 in order to better meet the needs of the trainees, improve NVQ achievement rates and to meet the demands of the Frameworks. • Attendance and timekeeping in wood occupations, hairdressing, motor vehicle, administration and leisure and tourism.

1.b Standards achieved: what is the standard of the learners' work in relation to their ability and their learning goals? Consider the extent to which all learners:

- achieve standards of work which match their prior achievement and ability and are in line with the demands and requirements of the programme;
- are clear about the standards required for the achievement of their qualification;
- develop the occupational, personal and social skills needed for effective participation in the workplace and in the community;
- have appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding (including health and safety requirements) relevant to current industrial practice;
- develop the language and discourse of their subject/vocational area;
- achieve levels of competence in the key skills and essential skills which are appropriate to their vocational programme and their prior achievements;
- display initiative, creativity and problem solving skills;
- are enabled to achieve irrespective of their social, religious or ethnic background.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good or better standards of occupational skills demonstrated by trainees • Some programme areas meet the performance target for the vocational area. • The majority of trainees see themselves as making a positive contribution to the workplace. • Access trainees have personal development in their programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance indicators for programme areas. • Programme reviews form Monitoring Officers in liaison with vocational tutors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The delivery of key skills to improve achievement rates for the entire Framework for training. • Developing appropriate levels of competence in Key Skills. • Extend the knowledge that trainees have of the demands of their chosen occupational area. • Provide personal development in all programme areas across all strands.

1.c Progression: how far does the progress of the learners build on their prior attainment and match their potential?

Consider the extent to which all learners:

- progress at a pace and level in line with their prior achievement and potential;
- progress to relevant further or higher education, training or employment;
- make significant progress towards fulfilling their goals and their potential;
- have a clear understanding of appropriate career paths relating to their programme and/or personal career goals.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the students/trainees are able and encouraged to express opinions confidently and competently. • The majority of trainees achieve the vocational outcomes identified in their individual training plans. • Progression in motor vehicle, hairdressing, plumbing and wood occupations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual training plans. • Performance targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students/trainees' ability to evaluate the quality of their work with a view to career progression. • Development of students/trainees ability to identify clearly relevant career paths. • Results of initial and diagnostic assessment need to be incorporated into ISLAs and individual training plans.

1.d Retention Rates and Results: what success has there been over time, in achieving a high level of retention and good standards in external examinations?

Consider the extent to which all learners:

- achieve retention, success and progression rates in line with the performance indicators and guidance set out in Appendix 1 & 2.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	Section Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention rates for traineeships range from poor to good. • Retention rates for traineeships in 04-05 in some programme areas are excellent. • Retention for the Access A1 strand ranges from satisfactory to excellent. • Success rates for Access A1 range from good to excellent. • Excellent essential skills success rates in training. • Progression rates to traineeship are excellent but for the 03-04 cohort some trainees are still on programme. • Achievement rates for Access A3 are satisfactory. • Success rates for Access A3 essential skills are excellent. • Progressions to traineeship for Access A3 are excellent for 02-03 cohort. Some trainees in 03-04 cohort are still on programme. • Success rates for traineeship for the 2002-03 cohort for NVQ are satisfactory. • Success rates for traineeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment, retention, success and progression statistics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention rates for most programme areas. • Review curriculum offer in light of cost, low recruitment to some programme areas, retention rates in all programme areas and success rates taking into account the inclusion of technical certificates in an already demanding Framework. • Retention rates in motor vehicle MA2, wood occupations, media, some A level programmes, some health and social care programmes, art, science & maths between AS and A2, fast track access health & welfare, business. • Success rates in motor vehicle MA2, CCLD level 2, hairdressing, key skills, and adult essential skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression within the non-construction vocational programmes. • Use of KPI by programme teams in monitoring and reviewing performance. 	

<p>in relation to Full Framework for 2002-03 are excellent in some areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention rates in plumbing, CCLD, hairdressing, computing, A levels, health and social care level 2, electrical, building engineering services, access health and welfare, education & administration Success rates in level 2 plumbing, motor vehicle and level 2 and MAs in wood occupations, A levels, CCLD part-time, intermediate health and social care, electrical, special needs, catering, beauty and HE. 			

2 Quality Of Teaching, Training And Learning: How well do learners learn?

2.a Ethos: how far does the atmosphere and distinctive character of the organization promote the full development of the learners?

In arriving at an evaluation of the ethos consider how far:

- the organization provides a welcoming and stimulating learning environment;
- the relationships among the staff and the learners are mutually respectful;
- the staff and learners share high expectations of behaviour and achievement;
- the self-esteem and self-confidence of the learners are promoted through the formal and informal curriculum;
- learners are encouraged to value one another and to respect their cultural diversity; they are encouraged to express their own views while appreciating the views of others;
- opportunities are provided beyond the formal curriculum, for learners to develop interests and abilities, and maintain their health and well-being.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well resourced training environment and Centre of Excellence for Construction and the Built Environment. Access for students/clients with special needs and disabilities is good and kept under review. Pastoral care for trainees is provided by suitably qualified and experienced staff that are sensitive to the needs of trainees. A personal tutor and Monitoring Officer are assigned to each trainee. Staff and students/trainees work well together in a caring and supportive environment. Students find they receive support and encouragement from staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre of Excellence recognition for DEL. Estates' strategy. Trainee reviews. Pre-Exit Annual Review Evaluation Form. ETI surveys. Marketing survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motor vehicle and electrical workshops Housekeeping in hairdressing Canteen facilities in Ballynahinch.

2.b Curriculum: how well do the programmes and courses provided meet the needs, potential and interests of the learners and take due regard of the needs of local circumstances?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of the curriculum, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- all learners have access to an appropriate range of courses and programmes, at a level which meets their needs, potential and aspirations, and meets the needs of the local community, the local employers and the regional economy;
- all learners have access to programmes, which are designed and managed effectively to provide coherence and progression, and to achieve suitable qualifications at national level;
- the provision is responsive to current educational and training practice and is in line with government priorities including the provision of essential and key skills;
- links with other organisations and stakeholders ensure coherence in progression and the opportunity for improvement in the design of courses;
- all learners have opportunity to participate in an appropriate range of enrichment activities, which enhance their personal and social development;
- the choice of venue, the teaching/training timetable and the mode of delivery of each programme are sufficiently flexible to ensure the maximum participation of learners;
- the provision is socially inclusive; widening access, and equality of opportunity are actively promoted;
- the provision is attracting increasing numbers of learners across a wide range of vocational programmes.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision is socially inclusive and equality of opportunity is actively promoted. • Provision is responsive to current educational needs and practice. • Provision is appropriate and meets the needs of most students and employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Training Plans/Personal Development Plans. • Equality Scheme. • Equality training. • Monitoring of community background. • Marketing survey. • ETI inspection findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development to deal with the changing needs of the client group autism (Asperger's Syndrome) & dyslexia. • Induction and initial assessment need to provide a greater understanding to trainees of expected outcomes and programme requirements. • Better use to be made of initial assessment results to inform the ITPs in order to implement a more appropriate support programme. • Employers need to have a greater understanding of their commitment and input to the learning programme. • Small numbers enrolled in motor vehicle, CCLD in Jobskills and MA, and full-time HE.

2.c Quality of Teaching and Training: how effectively do the teaching and training methods meet the needs of all the learners and help their progress?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of teaching and training, consider, where applicable, the extent to which the staff:

- plans the learning tasks effectively with clear objectives that all learners understand;
- ensures the development and assessment of key and essential skills as an integral part of the learning process;
- provides learners with individual, challenging learning goals based on suitable initial and continuous assessment;
- provides learners with challenging and realistic learning experiences, including work placements where appropriate;
- ensures that the pace and rigour of work are appropriate to the learners' needs;
- uses a variety of teaching and training approaches, which are consistent with learners' needs and aptitudes, and with the aims of the course;
- uses information computer and learning technology (ICT/ILT) to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and create flexible and innovative approaches to learning;
- demonstrates in their teaching and training approaches, up-to-date knowledge of industrial and business practices and research, along with the technical competence suitable for the course;

- sets and expect appropriate standards of work from learners;
- ensures that the quality of relationships encourages learners to learn and achieve high standards in their work;
- uses effectively the accommodation, the physical learning resources and the staff resources;
- is committed to continual improvement through effective and critical self-evaluation, and subsequent, appropriate action.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturers update their knowledge of business and industrial practices by participating in the LSDA and Institute Lecturer into Industry scheme. • Planning by lecturers takes account of the National Qualification's Framework and the most appropriate mode of delivery is agreed by the course team. • Monitoring of training process by lecturing staff and Monitoring Officers helps to improve the quality of relationships which in turn encourages learners to learn and achieve high standards in their work. • Good planning for technical certificates in hairdressing, CCLD and plumbing. • Good quality of almost all of the directed and workplace training. • Good quality of the majority of essential skills training. • Effective use of ILT in media, ICT, CCLD, A levels, Business, hospitality, hairdressing and beauty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schemes of work and lesson plans. • Minutes of meeting between Monitoring Officers and lecturing staff. • Staff development plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The delivery of key skills to improve achievement rates for Traineeships and Modern Apprenticeships against the Full Framework. • Overemphasis on assessment rather than the development of key skills in almost all programmes. • More effective use of ILT across programme areas.

2.d Quality of Learning: how well are learners helped to progress?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of learning, consider, where applicable, the extent to which the needs and interests of learners are met through:

- learning opportunities that are matched to their individual needs, and build effectively on their prior achievements;
- an appropriate range of learning experiences, including work placements;
- the active involvement of learners, and their taking responsibility for their own learning;
- the challenge to develop new knowledge, understanding and skills;
- the promotion of personal, social, ethical and cultural development;
- a balanced, broad, flexible and coherent curriculum, that enables progression and meets legal and course requirements;
- appropriate opportunities to achieve accreditation;
- the enrichment of effective partnerships;
- access to learning resources (including ICT/ILT) that promote a range of learning methods, including independent and group learning;
- a healthy and safe working environment, and the demonstration of safe working practices.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainees are provided with a good range of challenging opportunities to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding based on their individual needs. • Access to ICT/ILT resources, with tutors using online resources to support learning. • A developed health and safety process ensures that trainees and staff are provided with a healthy and safe environment. • Enrichment activities in Computing and ICT, media, leisure and tourism • Links with external agencies for special needs which help to inform course content and delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual training plans. • Lesson plans. • Risk assessments provided to Health and Safety Committee. • Induction contains a comprehensive health and safety programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to conduct risk assessment of workplaces. • Access to ILT facilities in plumbing, electrical, science, special needs.

2.e Assessment: how successful are the assessment practices in meeting the needs of the learners and in informing future teaching and training?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of assessment consider, where applicable, the extent to which for all learners:

- the purpose of individual assignments are clear and expectations are suitably high;
- their work is assessed regularly and the feedback given is effective in highlighting strengths and shortcomings and in providing guidance for improvement;
- the forms of assessment are appropriate, clear, fair and rigorous;
- their progress is monitored over time by individual tutors and by course teams and appropriate action is taken;
- there is encouragement to reflect on and discuss their own achievements with staff;
- assessment, verification and moderation procedures are appropriate and support their learning;
- the results of assessment are used to inform planning and improve the quality of teaching and training;
- achievements and qualifications are recorded and accredited systematically;
- those with a legitimate interest are clearly and regularly informed about their progress.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a systematic and well managed internal verification system which was recently updated and works effectively in most programme areas. • Online assessment of key skills provides prompt results for tutors and trainees. • Students receive rigorous and continuous feedback on performance through the assessment process in most programme areas. • Annual course review process provides teams with an opportunity to review strengths and devise action plans for improvement. • Regular meetings take place between lecturing staff and Monitoring Officers and allows progress to be monitored and corrective action to be taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment schedule. • Reports from Standards Moderator. • Internal Verification Procedure. • Minutes of meetings. • ETI reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More regular assessment throughout all vocational programmes both on directed training days and in the workplace. • Quality and rigour of some annual self-evaluation documents. • Ensuring meetings occur systematically across all schools between Monitoring Officers and vocational tutors and are effective for all aspects of the training process. • Internal verification in hairdressing. • Insufficient monitoring and assessment of trainee progress in the workplace.

2.f Quality of Learning Support: how effectively are the learners guided and supported in their learning?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of learning support consider, where applicable, the extent to which all learners:

- have an induction programme which enables them to settle quickly into their programme of learning, and to understand what is required of them, what are their responsibilities and what are their rights;
- receive good information and impartial advice, which they use to make appropriate choices about their learning, their learning programme and their career decisions;
- have their learning needs thoroughly identified, and have in place learning plans which are regularly reviewed by them and their tutors, and which effect progression;
- have regular and planned opportunities with appropriate staff, to reviewing their progress;
- have additional and effective support to help them address any difficulties which they experience;
- have adequate and easy access to, and can use effectively, the learning resources (paper and screen based), which they require to support their taught programme and to develop independent learning;
- know about and have access to the range of personal and social support services (including health, welfare and personal safety) to help them complete their learning programme and achieve their learning goals;
- have equality of opportunity;
- have sufficient and suitable opportunities to express their opinions about the quality of the provision they experience.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most students/ trainees receive an effective induction to all aspects of the learning programme. • All trainees have training plans that identify individual objectives. • Regular monitoring and review of students/trainee progress and suitable action is taken if required. • An effective and appropriate range of support services is in place to support individual needs of students/trainees. Good use is made of external agencies when required. • All students/trainees have equal opportunities within the programme provision. • Good quality of learning support in CCLD, hairdressing and plumbing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Training Plans. • Induction programme. • Review sheets. • Equality scheme. • Student Services and Learning Support Unit. • ETI inspection report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Monitoring Officers receive a copy of the Individual Training Plan at the commencement of the programme & tutors to liaise with the workplace. • More effective use of individual assessment and diagnostic testing to inform individual learning programmes for trainees in both key and essential skills. • Greater use of learning support for students on A level, administration and art programmes.

2.g Staffing: how does the provision and management of resources support the curriculum? In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of resources, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- there are sufficient qualified and experienced staff, who are appropriately deployed to match the demands of programmes and support the needs of learners;
- all staff undertake appropriate and regular professional development in their subject/vocational area to maintain effectiveness in meeting the demands of the curriculum and the changing needs of industry;
- all staff are provided with suitable induction, regular professional review and support, which meet the needs of individuals, course teams and the organisation as a whole;
- individual teaching/training staff and course teams evaluate regularly the effectiveness of the learning experiences they provide for learners, and take appropriate action.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are suitably qualified and experienced for the delivery of programmes. Roles and responsibilities are clear. Staff development needs are clearly identified and a substantial programme of staff development is delivered. Good participation in the LSDA and Institute Lecturer into Industry Scheme, coaching and First Line Management training for some course co-ordinators and TO staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff development plan Staffing review. First Line Management programme. Coaching programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve the interface between the academic schools and the Training Organisation. More evaluative review of the effectiveness of the learning experience provided for learners.

2. h Physical Resources: how does the provision and management of the accommodation and physical resources support the curriculum?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of resources, consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- the quality and quantity of accommodation and learning resource facilities are sufficient to support the educational and training needs of all learners;
- all learners have suitable access to learning resource facilities to meet their individual learning and programme needs;
- all staff have suitable access to appropriate teaching/training facilities;
- all accommodation and learning resource facilities comply with relevant legislation, including health and safety, and the needs of those with disabilities;
- the range of specialist equipment provided for the curriculum and support learning is in line with current industry standards;
- there are effective arrangements to keep equipment and accommodation up-to-date;
- all accommodation and learning resource facilities are well maintained and managed with due regard to safety, security and efficiency

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	Section Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well resourced training environment with industry and business standard equipment. Centre of Excellence for Construction and the Built Environment. Access for clients with special needs and disabilities is good and kept under review. All physical resources meet current legislative requirements. Resources and accommodation are an integral part of course review and evaluation. Plans to build new modern campuses in Downpatrick, Newcastle and Ballynahinch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre of Excellence recognition for DEL. Estates' strategy. ETI inspection report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleanliness and tidiness of motor vehicle and electrical workshops and hairdressing salon. Access to canteen and learning resource facilities for electrical students. 	

3 Leadership And Management: How Effective Are Leadership And Management At All Levels in the Organisation, In Ensuring High Quality Education & Training For Learners?

3.a Leadership: to what extent does management provide strategic leadership and clear direction to achieving high quality education and training?

In arriving at an evaluation of the strategic leadership of management consider the extent to which, where applicable:

- there is a commitment to excellence in performance and continuous improvement throughout the organisation;
- there is clear strategic leadership throughout the organisation;
- the organisation's mission, strategic objectives and targets are understood fully by staff;
- strategic planning is informed by reliable and accurate information on the organisation's external and internal environments and these are addressed fully in the organisation's development plan;
- the governing body or the management board is effective in overseeing the strategic planning of the organisation;
- members regularly monitor the quality of education and training, the standards achieved by learners and the financial management of the organisation;
- staff are appropriately involved in the production of the organisation's development plan and communication is effective within the organisation;
- management information is used effectively to monitor the quality of provision and to plan for improvement, at all levels within the organisation;
- responsibilities of the members of senior management are clearly defined, delegated appropriately and implemented effectively and efficiently;
- education and training programmes are well managed for the benefit of the learners; programme leaders provide good leadership and they undertake their administrative and curricular responsibilities effectively;
- the pursuit and achievement of high levels of performance characterise all aspects of work of the organisation; demanding targets for retention, success and progression are set and met, and action is taken to address weaknesses;
- management style, structures and systems are appropriate to the goals of the organisation and the nature of the education and training provided.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute has achieved Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) accreditation and is working towards achieving Investors in People. • Good leadership and management in most areas of learning. • A culture of self-evaluation is well embedded across the Institute. A summary of annual course reviews is provided to senior management and governors. Follow-up meetings take place with course teams to monitor progress on plans for improvement. • Leadership from management is effective and there are good relationships between management and staff. • Staff are well motivated and have a professional approach to their work. • Management team completes an annual SWOT analysis which informs strategic planning. • Institute Strategic Development Plan is written annually and there are regular reviews of progress towards implementation of objectives. • Institute's strategic and specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of senior management team meetings; minutes of meetings of Governing Body; minutes of course team meetings. • Institute Development Plan. • Summary of Annual Course Review. • SFEDI accreditation. • Papers on use of occupational standards. • Training Organisation restructuring proposals. • DEL feedback on College Development Plan. • ETI inspection report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further staff development on evaluative self-evaluation reports. • Target setting and use of KPIs by course teams. • Planning for the development and assessment of key skills across all of the Jobskills programmes.

<p>objectives were discussed with all staff at August staff meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding of the occupational standards for governors, managers and lecturers to benchmark performance is underway. • Governors undertake their duties with a high degree of commitment and professionalism. • Governors play an active part in developing the strategic priorities of the Institute. • Roles and responsibilities of the members of senior management are clearly defined, delegated appropriately and implemented effectively and efficiently. • Implementation of effective strategies to improve retention and success rates in most areas of learning. • Deployment of hard-working vocational and administrative staff, who are committed to meeting the individual needs of students/trainees. 		
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3. b Quality Assurance: how effective are quality assurance procedures in maintaining and improving education and training, and standards across the organisation?

In arriving at an evaluation of quality assurance consider the extent to, where applicable:

- quality assurance arrangements are effectively integrated into the organisation's strategic planning and understood by all staff;
- quality assurance procedures are uniform across the organisation; they are implemented and acted on effectively and due attention is given to the quality of teaching and learning;
- self-evaluation at all levels is systematic and rigorous, and supported with reliable evidence; it is followed up with appropriate action to improve the quality of education and training;
- realistic and relevant performance indicators are used regularly and, at all levels, to review the effectiveness of the learners' achievements;
- evaluative feedback from learners and external sources is sought, considered and acted on as appropriate.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality procedures are well understood by all staff. • Maintain the new database which captures all elements of trainee performance. • Good internal quality assurance procedures in CCLD, plumbing and wood occupations in training. • Implementation of effective strategies to improve retention and success in most areas of learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly progress report to management team on performance indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective use of the KPIs in carrying out self evaluation and development planning. • Firmer action on those aspects of programme areas which have been identified as areas for improvement. • Greater input from lecturing staff on producing self-evaluation reports. • Internal quality assurance arrangements in hairdressing. • Introduction of a programme of teaching and learning observation.

3. c Management of Resources: how effectively and efficiently are resources managed across the organisation?

In arriving at an evaluation of the effective use of resources in the organisation consider the extent to which:

- resources available to the organisation are used efficiently and effectively, within the constraints of the budget, to ensure there are appropriate human and physical resources to support learners and to meet curriculum requirements;
- effective systems are in place to monitor the financial position of the organisation;
- the organisation has been successful in obtaining additional resources through the development of close working relationships and partnerships with industry or other external bodies;
- the organisation operates an effective human resource strategy; all staff are valued and appropriate procedures are in place to review their performance and meet their professional development needs.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgetary system is in place that allows for appropriate resources to be made available to support training and learning. • Institute secures additional funding outside DEL allocations. • Effectiveness of procedures for managing and monitoring financial and programme performance. • Comprehensive staff development programme which provides all staff with appropriate opportunities for learning and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget reports. • Monthly trainee progress reports. • Inventory reports. • ILT capital bid to DEL. • TO procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise funding available for programme performance. • Housekeeping in a few workshops.

3.d External Links: what is the quality of links with key external stakeholders?

In arriving at an evaluation of the quality of links with key stakeholders

consider the extent to which:

- good communication and effective partnerships have been established with appropriate external stakeholders in business, industry, education and in the community;
- the links with external stakeholders contribute, for example, to the design of programmes, to the provision of work-based learning and to the up-dating of the staff expertise; they also inform the strategic direction of the college.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of School maintain a database of key external contacts with industry, business and the community to support training. • In the majority of programmes, external links contribute to effective programme design, work-based training and up-dating staff expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of external contacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that more effective links are established in all programme areas with industry, business and the community. • Development of more effective collaboration with employers to devise suitable training plans for trainees in the workplace.

3.e Equality of Opportunity: how well is equality of opportunity promoted to ensure that learners achieve their full potential?

In arriving at an evaluation of the promotion of equality of opportunity within the organisation,

consider the extent to which:

- relationships within the organisation are good and there are effective procedures to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including all forms of harassment;
- appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that all learners and potential learners have equal opportunities and to deal with appraisals and complaints;
- the organisation actively ensures that its provision is open and accessible to all learners, regardless of background and in a way that is commensurate with their abilities.

STRENGTHS	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	Section Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A developed health and safety process ensures that trainees and staff are provided with a healthy and safe environment. • Equality Scheme ensures that students/trainees and staff have open and free access to provision irrespective of their religious, ethnic or sexual orientation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessments provided to Health and Safety Committee. • Induction contains a comprehensive health and safety programme. • Equality scheme. • Training for staff on the Equality Scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding of Equality Scheme across the Institute. 	
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OVERALL GRADE FOR COURSE			

APPENDIX 4.3 IQ: RS SECTION of LNIFHE Development Plan (October 2005)

IQ: RS SECTION	ACTION REQUIRED TO ADDRESS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	STAFF	TIMESCALE TARGET DATES	ACTION and DATES
1.a	Closer working relationships between employers and Training Organisation to inform employers about the requirements of the Occupational Frameworks in order to improve learning and achievement rates.	Head of Training Organisation (HTO) & Monitoring Officers	December 05	
1.a	The Training Organisation needs to make better provision for those trainees who are capable of achieving beyond the minimum requirements.	Heads of School (HOS)	December 05	
1.a	Increase levels of learning support in vocational and key skills classes, particularly at level 2 in order to better meet the needs of the trainees, improve NVQ achievement rates and to meet the demands of the Frameworks.	HOS & HTO	December 05	
1.a	Agree joint procedures to improve attendance and timekeeping in wood occupations, hairdressing, motor vehicle, administration and leisure and tourism.	HOS & HTO	December 05	
1.b	The delivery of essential skills to improve achievement rates for the entire Framework.	HOS	May 06	
1.b	Through programme of staff development developing appropriate levels of competence in key skills.	HOS	June 06	
1.b	Extend the knowledge that trainees have of the demands of their chosen occupational area.	HOS & HTO	December 05	
1.b	Provide personal development in all programme areas across all strands.	HOS	January 06	
1.c	Trainees' ability to evaluate the quality of their work with a view to career progression.	HOS & HTO	March 06	
1.c	Development of students/trainees ability to identify clearly relevant career paths.	HOS & HTO	March 06	
1.c	Incorporate results of initial and diagnostic assessment into ISLAs and individual training plans.	Vocational tutors	December 05	
1.d	Increase progression within the non-construction vocational programmes to FE.	HOS	June 06	
1.d	Improve retention rates in motor vehicle MA2, wood occupations, media, some A level programmes, some health and social care programmes, art, science & maths between AS and A2, fast track access health & welfare, business.	HOS & HTO	June 06	

IQ: RS SECTION	ACTION REQUIRED TO ADDRESS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	STAFF	TIMESCALE TARGET DATES	ACTIO Nand DATES
1.d	Review curriculum offer in light of cost, low recruitment to some programme areas, retention rates in all programme areas and achievement rates taking into account the inclusion of technical certificates in an already demanding Framework.	HOS & HTO	May 06	
1.d	Improve success rates in motor vehicle MA2, CCLD level 2, hairdressing, key skills, and adult essential skills.	HOS & HTO	June 06	
1.d	Ensure use of KPI by programme teams in monitoring and reviewing performance.	Vocational tutors	December 05	
2.a	Make improvements to motor vehicle and electrical workshops and housekeeping in hairdressing.	HOS & Vocational tutors	December 05	
2.b	Staff development to deal with the changing needs of the client group – autism (Asperger's Syndrome) & dyslexia.	Senior Lecturer Staff Development	Easter 06	
2.b	Induction and initial assessment needs to provide a greater understanding to trainees of expected outcomes and programme requirements	Vocational tutors	April 06	
2.b	Better use to be made of initial assessment results to inform the ITPs and ISLAs in order to implement a more appropriate support programme.	Vocational tutors	April 06	
2.b	Introduce employer information sessions so that employers can have a greater understanding of their commitment and input to the learning programme	Vocational tutors & Monitoring Officers	June 06	
2.b	Take steps to increase enrolments or otherwise deal with small numbers enrolled in motor vehicle, CCLD in Jobskills and MA, and full-time HE.	HOS, HTO	June 06	
2.c	The delivery of key skills to improve achievement rates for Traineeships and Modern Apprenticeships	Key skills tutors	December 05 onwards	
2.d	Provide staff development in order that teaching will give due attention to the development of key skills in almost all programmes.	Staff Development Officer & Key Skills tutors	Easter 06	
2.d	Continue to conduct risk assessment of workplaces	Monitoring Officers & Vocational tutors	December 05	
2.d	Greater access to be provided to ILT resources, including teaching rooms.	HOS	January 06	

IQ: RS SECTION	ACTION REQUIRED TO ADDRESS FOR IMPROVEMENT	STAFF	TIMESCALE TARGET DATES	ACTION and DATES
2.e	More regular assessment throughout all vocational programmes both on directed training days and in the workplace.	Vocational tutors	June 06	
2.e	Ensuring meetings occur systematically across all schools between Monitoring Officers and vocational tutors and are effective for all aspects of the training process.	HOS, Monitoring Officers & Vocational tutors	December 05	
2.e	Provide staff development to improve the quality and rigour of some annual self-evaluation documents.	Deputy Director, HOS and vocational tutors	Easter 06	
2.e	Improve internal verification in hairdressing.	HOS	December 05	
2.e	Review monitoring and assessment of trainee progress in the workplace to ensure it is more frequent.	HOS & HTO	December 05	
2.f	Ensure that Monitoring Officers receive a copy of the Individual Training Plan at the commencement of the programme & tutors to liaise with the workplace.	Monitoring Officers & Vocational tutors	September 05	
2.f	Make more effective use of individual assessment and diagnostic testing to inform individual learning programmes for trainees in both key and essential skills.	Vocational tutors	October 05	
2.f	Increase the use of learning support for students on A level, administration and art programmes.	Vocational tutors and learning support staff	April 06	
2.g	Continue to improve the interface between the academic schools and the Training Organisation.	HOS & HTO	Ongoing	
2.g	Introduce a programme of teaching observation to review the effectiveness of the learning experience provided for learners.	Deputy Director	January 06	
2.h	Improve cleanliness and tidiness of motor vehicle, electrical workshops and hairdressing salon.	HOS & vocational tutors	December 05	
2.h	Access to canteen and learning resource facilities for electrical.	HOS	December 05	
3.a	Further staff development on evaluative self-evaluation reports.	Deputy Director	Easter 06	
3.a	Provide staff development to improve target setting and use of KPIs by course teams.	Deputy Director	Easter 06	

IQ: RS SECTION	ACTION REQUIRED TO ADDRESS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	STAFF	TIMESCALE TARGET DATES	ACTION and DATES
3.a	Provide staff development in order that teaching will give due attention to the development of key skills in almost all programmes.	Staff Development Officer & Key Skills tutors	Easter 06	
3.b	Further staff development on evaluative self-evaluation reports.	Deputy Director	Easter 06	
3.b	Take firmer action on those aspects of programme areas which have been identified as areas for improvement.	HOS & HTO	June 06	
3.b	Greater input from lecturing staff on producing self-evaluation reports.	Vocational tutors	June 06	
3.b	Improve internal quality assurance arrangements in hairdressing.	HOS	December 05	
3.b	Introduction of a programme of teaching and learning observation.	Deputy Director	January 06	
3.c	Maximise funding available for programme performance.	HOS, HTO & Vocational tutors	June 06	
3.c	Improve housekeeping in a few workshops	HOS & vocational tutors	December 05	
3.d	Ensure that more effective links are established in all programme areas with industry, business and the community:	HOS, HTO & Vocational tutors	June 06	
3.d	Development of more effective collaboration with employers to devise suitable training plans for trainees in the workplace.	HOS, HTO & Vocational tutors	June 06	

Appendix 4.4 LNIFHE Student Centred Pathway

This policy demonstrates the Institute's approach to the concept of student-centredness and indicates the range of services needed to facilitate it at an institutional level

Industry School Community	Marketing	Enquiry	Planning And Choosing	Enrolment	Orientation And Induction
Local Employers	Quality Delivery	Information Giving	Advice Centre	Information to Students	Initial Assessment
Community Networks	Research	Data Analysis	Specialised Guidance	Enrolment logged	Building student Involvement
Community Education Forum	Job Market	Students Admissions Officers	Careers Guidance	National Record of achievements	Study Skills
Local Schools	Adult Guidance Centre	Enquiries Logged	Mode of Attendance	Record of Achievements	Induction Process
Local District Council	Advertising Publicity / Education Fairs / Visits / Conventions	Student Database	Interview and assessment	Follow up lost Enquiries	Action Plans
Collaboration Fund	Student Network / Schools Contacts		Prior learning Assessment	Student Handbook	
	Word of Mouth		Diagnostic Individual Assessment	Financial Advice	
	Referrals		Financial Advice		
	Admissions Seminars				
	Taster Courses				
	Open days Workshop				

Learning Support	Personal Support	Work Experience	Type name here Accreditation	Evaluation	Learner Exit
Individual Learning Support	Personal tutor	Work based assessment	Certification	Exit and Progression	Employment Information to Leavers
Guest speakers	Follow up early Leavers	National Record of Achievement	Examinations	Action Plan	Follow up
Lecturer input			National Record of Achievement	Outcomes, Exam Results, Destinations	Measure value Added
Computer Aided learning	Peer Counseling	Simulated work Experience	Prior Learning Accreditation	Student input into review	FELS
ICT	Student Counsellor	Work Placements	Portfolio	Student Feedback	Report Analysis
Visits	Careers Advice		Summative Assessments		
Volunteer/peer tutoring	Student Socialisation				
Flexible delivery					
Formative Assessments					
Personal tutor systems					
Learning Centres					

MONITORING

EVALUATION

REVIEW

Appendix 4.5**LNIFHE Strategic Objectives and Targets**

Strategic Objective: 1

Curriculum and Quality: – To continue the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy in line with Government Policies

Quality

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
1.1	To implement and embed the European Foundation Quality Management Excellence Model	Implement and review effectiveness of action plans arising from self-evaluation using the Excellence Model	Deputy Director
1.2	To develop and pilot a retention strategy on selected programmes	Devise strategy and select pilot courses by September 2004. Monitor effectiveness of strategy at November 2004, January, March and May 2005	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.3	To embed a new Internal Verification strategy on NVQ programmes	Internal verification structure to be in place August 2004. Staff training to be completed by October 2004. Monitor progress at monthly Curriculum and Quality meetings.	Deputy Director
1.4	To continue to develop and improve school links programme	Revise range of school links by August 2004. Monitor arrangements on a termly basis.	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.5	To further embed the work with Grammar and Secondary schools.	To explore further opportunities for vocational programmes for the better able grammar/secondary schools in line with the vocational enhancement programme.	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.6	To provide access to timely and accurate financial information for curriculum management and improvement	Identify source and nature of data requirements by August 2004. Trial use of new management reports by October 2004. Identify improvements and implement changes by December 2004.	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.7	To implement improvements to the interface between the Training Organisation and schools	Implement agreed action plan and responsibilities by September 2004. Review progress by November 2004 and at monthly meetings of Training Organisation Planning Group.	Deputy Director
1.8	To complete self-evaluation and devise development plan on Institute provision.	Prepare Institute self-evaluation and development plan by October 2004. Report findings to first meeting of Education Committee of Governing Body in 2004-05.	Deputy Director
1.9	To further improve the monitoring of retention.	Provide staff development on retention by August 2004. Commence embedding of retention project by September 2004. Implement use of an updated reporting document by September 2004.	Deputy Director
1.10	To achieve as a minimum a grade 2 or better in ETI inspections.	Introduce quality checklist for full-time FE and costs recovery and major part-time courses by August 2004. Monitor implementation of action plans arising from 2003-04 course review process by December 2004.	Deputy Director

Curriculum

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
1.11	To improve the curriculum offer on Key Skills and Essential Skills.	Review curriculum offer – Key Skills, Wider Key Skills and Essential Skills August 2004. Implement improvements and enrichment programme September 2004.	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.12	To clarify and improve progression routes for students.	Commence mapping of progression routes by September 2004. Identify gaps in progression routes and develop new qualifications in partnership with NIOCN and other awarding bodies by December 2004.	Deputy Director
1.13	To review curriculum offer to ensure that it meets the needs of the local economy.	Conduct initial review by October 2004. Discuss proposals with Ards Borough Council and Down District Council by November 2004.	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.14	To implement the introduction of Technical Certificates on Jobskills programmes.	To plan for the effective delivery of Technical Certificates by June 2004. To monitor implementation at November 2004 and January 2005.	Heads of School
1.15	To introduce revised Modern Apprenticeship programmes.	Each school to prepare for the introduction of revised MAs August 2004.	Heads of School
1.16	To review the impact of Educational Maintenance Allowance.	Review of administrative arrangements for EMAs to be completed by December 2004. Revisions to marketing and administration of EMAs to be implemented by February 2005.	Assistant Director: Course Provision
1.17	To embed distance learning in each School.	Each school to identify courses suitable for embedding by August 2004 and support commencing by September 2004.	Heads of School
1.18	To identify appropriate niche markets for curriculum development.	Examine opportunities and develop strategies for niche markets on a school basis by November 2004. Undertake curriculum development and marketing by March 2005.	Heads of School
1.19	To update Centre of Excellence action plan.	Review plan and carry out SWOT analysis of School by August 2004. Devise plan for 2004-2006 by September 2004 and commence implementation.	Head of School Built Environment
1.20	To further embed Centre of Excellence activities within the work of the School of Built Environment.	Update schemes of work in all areas of the School by September 2004. Monitor implementation of schemes on a termly basis.	Head of School Built Environment
1.21	To proactively plan to enter competitions on an annual basis	Timetable for competitions entries to be available by October 2004. Progress on entries to be reviewed termly.	Assistant Director: Course Provision

Higher Education

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
1 22	To increase recruitment to HE programmes in all schools	To recruit viable Foundation Degrees within the School of Built Environment and Business and Leisure; and viable Higher Nationals within the Schools of Social Science, Business and Leisure and Informatics and Design	Heads of School
1 23	To clarify and improve progression routes for students from level 2 to level 4 (include MAs)	Clarify progression routes by November 2004. Include progression routes in Institute prospectuses. Tutors to promote progression routes to students before the end of each course.	Heads of School
1 24	To identify appropriate markets for students which will consolidate HE enrolments.	Review curriculum offering, including that of other colleges by September 2004. Plan and implement changes to curriculum offer by March 2005.	Heads of School
1 25	To promote the benefits of HE to employers.	Identify employers by sector and arrange meetings by August 2004. Follow-up contacts by September 2004 and again by March 2005. Hold further employer briefings by May 2005.	Heads of School
1 26	To introduce cross-Institute 'Preparation for HE' study programme for adult returners.	Cross-Institute Preparation for HE course to be designed by September 2004. Programme to be delivered by October 2004	Principal Lecturer Curriculum and Quality
1 27	To explore HE links with Q.U.B.	Discussion with QUB to determine suitability of provision by November 2004. HE Plans to reflect outcome of discussions.	Principal Lecturer Curriculum and Quality
1 28	To increase achievement rates at level 2 & 3 in line with DEL targets.	By March 2005, 60% of trainees who commenced a Jobskills level 2 in 2000/01 will have achieved NVQ, and 50% will have achieved of those who commenced an MA in 1999/2000.	Heads of School and Head of Training Organisation
1 29	To have supported Essential Skills learners in line with DEL targets.	By March 2005 420 Essential Skill learners will have been supported to improve their literacy and numeracy skills with 40% achieving one of the 5 levels of Essential Skills	Head of School Administration and Education
1 30	To increase the achievement rates at level 2 to 4 in line with DEL targets.	By September 2005 the percentage of FE students gaining full or unit passes at NVQ levels 2 to 4 will be 72% or better.	Assistant Director, Course Provision

Strategic Objective: 2

ICT/ILT/MIS: - To carry out the activities necessary to make the transition to a fully operational MLE by 2007

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
2 1	To plan for the integration of QLS and Blackboard.	Determine technical and staffing requirements and processes by November 2004. Implement actions by April 2005.	MIS Manager
2 2	To investigate developments of intranet and portal technologies and inform plans accordingly.	Inform E Council of changes and incorporate within ICT/ILT Strategy by October 2004	Deputy Director
2 3	To implement actions as part of the Northern Ireland Integrated Managed Learning Environment (NIIMLE).	Commence actions in accordance with NIIMLE project team by October 2004.	Heads of School Informatics and Design and Business and Leisure
2 4	To improve network links between campuses.	Prioritise recommendations from Regional Support Centre for improvements to network by August 2004 and commence implementation.	Deputy Director
2 5	To prepare for transition from Super Janet to Northern Ireland Regional Area Network (NIRAN)	Prepare and implement action plan in conjunction with NIRAN by November 2004	MIS Manager
2 6	To plan for the use of wireless technology within ICT/ILT strategy and PFI plans.	PFI plans and ICT/ILT strategy to specify approach to using wireless technology by October 2004.	Deputy Director
2 7	Teaching and assessment strategies to incorporate ICT as a means to support teaching and learning.	Teaching and assessment strategies to be monitored for use of ICT to support teaching, learning and assessment by October 2004, January 2005 and April 2005	Heads of School
2 8	To embed the services available to Institute from the NICIS System eg e-registers, reporting.	Reporting tools to be effectively used by managers by November 2004	Assistant Director, Corporate Services
2 9	To continue with business process re-engineering to include HR and Estates	Action plan to be implemented by June 2005.	Assistant Director, Corporate Services
2 10	To use Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to improve business performance.	To commence CRM pilot by October 2004. To improve business development processes using CRM by June 2005.	Deputy Director

Strategic Objective 3

Business Development: – To develop and ethos within the Institute which further develops the Institute's role within economic development

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
3 1	To identify and secure additional funds from external sources	Each school to meet the targets set in the school budget and targets in terms of companies/employees. A range of project bids and commercial training to be identified by September 2004. Bids and commercial development activities to be reported at monthly meeting of Enterprise Committee.	Heads of School
3 2	To explore the opportunities offered by the Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme	Identify a suitable company by November 2004. Application to be made to January 2005.	Deputy Director
3 3	To explore opportunities for participating in joint ANIC/NICO/British Council overseas activities	To participate in joint ANIC/NICO bids for overseas activities by March 2005.	Deputy Director
3 4	To implement an appropriate study for the setting up of an incubation service	Plan to be written and implemented by November 2004	Deputy Director
3 5	To identify and secure funding for incubation development service.	Submit applications for funding to a range of external funders by November 2004	Deputy Director
3 6	To work with local partners in the development of the social economy.	Identify needs in estates and rural areas of high social deprivation by November 2004. Implement appropriate training and development activities by January 2005	Deputy Director
3 7	To use the satellite coach in supporting SMEs and micro-businesses.	To obtain funding for a dedicated driver/technician by October 2004. Implement a programme of support by November 2004	Deputy Director
3 8	To establish the e-Learn Shop as a major source of information support and development for local small businesses.	Review and streamline the cross-referral process between leamdirect and school programmes by September 2004. Schools to identify appropriate commercial development advisors to work with Business Development Manager on visits to local employers.	Deputy Director
3 9	To develop, implement and maintain a contact/client information system that is accessible to all staff involved in business development.	Centralise information held by November 2004. Establish appropriate measures to record business activity	Deputy Director

Strategic Objective: 4.

Governance: – To provide the governing body with the necessary training to carry out its function.

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
4 1	To develop the programme of governor training	Programme of training to meet needs identified through using the FENTO Standards for Governors to be identified and plan formulated for implementation by November 2004.	Assistant Director Corporate Services
4 2	To engage with DEL, ANIC and other relevant organisations in taking forward the recommendations in the Review of FE: 'FE Means Business'	DEL recommendations following consultation to be considered and appropriate actions taken by July 2005.	Director

Strategic Objective: 5

Human Resources: – To continue to review and implement human resource management policies and agreements and to align them with current Institute activities.

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
5 1	To embed the revised structure for the Training Organisation	Monitor embedding of revised structure by November 2004	Deputy Director
5 2	To carry out a comprehensive review of HR strategy in line with the HR module of the new NICIS system	Commence review by August 2004 and prepare recommendations by February 2005	Human Resource Manager
5 3	To provide improved secretarial support to the Heads of School	Implement changes to Senior Lecturer roles & administrative support by September 2004	Assistant Director Course Provision
5 4	To merge the existing teaching and non-teaching places into a cross-Institute staff development plan	Devise plan by November 2004 and implement by June 2005	Assistant Director Course Provision
5 5	To make final proposals for the review of the SMT Structure	Review to be carried out by September 2004. Proposals to be presented to Staffing Committee by October 2004	Director
5 6	To achieve IP accreditation	To achieve IP recognition by December 2004	Deputy Director

Strategic Objective: 6.

Estates: - To Continue to progress the Institutes plans to bring the PPP project to completion and continue to maintain the existing estate to an acceptable level in the interim.

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
6.1	To review the future plans for the Institute's out-centres outside the PPP Project.	Carry out review of out-centres taking into account FE Review and Post Primary Report by February 2005	Deputy Director
6.2	To obtain internal and external funding to continue the maintenance of the existing estate until the completion of the PPP Project	Secure funding from Institute budget by September 2004 and make bids to DEL by March 2005.	Estates Manager
6.3	To provide adequate resources to embed the NICIS estates module	Determine implications of the NICIS estates module and include financial allocation in 2004-05 budget by September 2004	Estates Manager

Strategic Objective: 7.

Finance and resources: – To continue to improve the financial viability of the Institute

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
7.1	To increase the diversity of income from non-DEL sources by £100,000 in line with DEL targets	Each school to meet the targets set in the school budget and targets in terms of companies/employees by June 2005	Deputy Director
7.2	To continue to implement measures relating to savings re PPP affordability	Implement revised measures and review in December 2004, March and June 2005	Institute Accountant
7.3	To reduce staffing costs by 3-5% on 2003-04	Plan to achieve savings by September 2004	Assistant Director Course Provision & Assistant Director Corporate Services
7.4	To implement a plan for matching adequate resources to curriculum development, staff development and student learning resources	Identify savings and plan re-allocation of resources by September 2004	Assistant Director Course Provision
7.5	To prepare a Euro Conversion plan for the Institute	To plan the effective change over exercise in line with DEL guidance by July 05	Institute Accountant

Strategic Objective: 8.

E-Government: - To identify services and functions for electronic service delivery.

Ref	Specific Objective	Target	Lead Person
8.1	To implement on-line staff recruitment in line with the new NICIS HR module	Implementation to be completed by July 05	Assistant Director Corporate Services
8.2	To implement a system for student e-enrolments in line with NICIS programme	Implementation to be completed by July 2005	Assistant Director Corporate Services
8.3	To review Institute web site in line with disability legislation	Review to be completed by September 2004 Improvements to be completed by December 2004	MIS Manager
8.4	To identify areas in the Estates Unit for e-services development	Plan for development to be completed by November 2004	Estates Manager
8.5	To create a document management system that will comply with legislative requirements	Evaluate requirements and seek necessary funding by September 2004. Implement a document management system by January 2005.	Assistant Director Corporate Services

APPENDIX 5.1 Results from the Student Questionnaire

Q1. Which course are you enrolled in?

Admin & Education.....	13.1%
Business & Leisure.....	18.8%
Social Science.....	18.8%
Applied Science.....	17.4%
Built Environment.....	13.1%
Informatics & Design.....	18.8%
Total Response 100%	

Q2. Are you

16-19.....	90%
20+.....	10.0%
Full time.....	61.4%
Part time.....	38.6%
Total Response 100%	

Q3. What are your reasons for attending?

Work related / sponsored.....	24.3%
Leisure.....	0.0%
Progress to higher education.....	75.7%
Q3. Other.....	0.0%
Total Response 100%	

Q4 Regarding your attendance, which of these factors below have helped it or made it difficult?

Q5. During tour induction week advice was given in some of the

Factors	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	Total
Financial	11	18.6	16	27.1	20	33.9	11	18.6	1	1.7	59
Personal	14	22.6	18	29.0	22	35.5	5	8.1	3	4.8	62
Support	19	30.2	18	28.6	18	28.6	6	9.5	2	3.2	63
Organisational	14	25.5	17	30.9	16	29.1	3	5.5	5	9.1	55
Others	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
Total	59	24.4	70	28.9	77	31.8	25	10.3	11	4.5	242

following areas; how good was given in an area, please tick 'none'

Area	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	6	%	Totals
Choice of Course	2	2.9	3	4.3	15	21.7	22	31.9	23	33.3	4	5.8	69
Course Content	1	1.5	2	2.9	14	20.6	30	44.1	21	30.9	0	0.0	68
Career	3	4.1	9	12.2	7	9.5	24	32.4	13	17.6	18	24.3	74
Timetable	7	10.1	3	4.3	17	24.6	28	40.6	12	17.4	2	2.9	69
Financial Support	5	7.4	4	5.9	20	29.4	21	30.9	10	14.7	8	11.8	68
Study Support	3	5.6	4	7.4	17	31.5	18	33.3	8	14.8	4	7.4	54
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0		0
Total	21	5.2	25	6.2	90	22.4	143	35.6	87	21.6	36	9.0	402

Q6. Do you think that your chosen course/programme the correct one for you?

Yes.....	85.7%
No.....	4.3%
Please comment, ...	8.6%
<i>Total Response 90 %</i>	

Q7. How often do you have individual contact with your tutor?

Where you can have a private discussion?

Weekly.....	42.9%
Fortnightly.....	8.6%
Monthly.....	11.4%
Each Term.....	24.3%
Twice a year.....	2.9%
Yearly.....	2.9%
Other (please specify).....	2.9%
<i>Total Response 95.7%</i>	

Q8. Regarding the discussions with your tutors, please estimate how useful was the advice/feedback that you received by ticking one box,

1.....	2.9%
2.....	7.1%
3.....	20.0%
4.....	25.7%
5.....	37.1%
Please comment,	27.1%
<i>Total Response 87.8%</i>	

Q9. Have you been given added study support to assist studies?

Yes.....	40.0%
No.....	52.9%
<i>Total Response 92.9%</i>	

Q10 Regarding your attendance, which of these factors below have helped it or made it difficult?

Q10	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	Total
ICT	1	8.3	2	16.7	2	16.7	3	25.0	4	33.3	12
Communication	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	21.4	4	28.6	7	50.0	14
Numeracy	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	7.1	7	50.0	6	42.9	14
Basic Skills	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	9.1	3	27.3	7	63.6	11
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	1	20.0	5
Total	1	1.8	2	3.6	9	16.1	19	33.9	25	44.6	56

Q11. Please estimate how good the quality of teaching on your course (as a whole) is by ticking one box (please feel free to comment in the comment box

1.....	1.4%
2.....	0.0%
3.....	11.4%
4.....	41.4%
5.....	40.0%

Total Response 94.2%

Q12. State what interests or motivates you about your studies or experiences at this college

Q12	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	Total
Course Design	5	20.0	6	24.0	7	28.0	3	12.0	4	16.0	25
Suitable Timetable	1	3.8	7	26.9	5	19.2	7	26.9	6	23.1	26
Good Teaching	19	40.4	12	25.5	11	23.4	4	8.5	1	2.1	47
Good Tutor Support and Advice	2	10.5	7	36.8	6	31.6	2	10.5	2	10.5	19
Meeting Targets as set by your Tutor	3	13.0	4	17.4	7	30.4	8	34.8	1	4.3	23
Support from fellow Students	1	4.0	6	24.0	6	24.0	5	20.0	7	28.0	25
Good Career advice	6	30.0	5	25.0	2	10.0	5	25.0	2	10.0	20
Prizes and ceremonies	8	88.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	11.1	0	0.0	9
Student Learning contracts (ISLA)	3	33.3	1	11.1	4	44.4	1	11.1	0	0.0	9
Parental involvement	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Disciplinary Procedures	2	28.6	1	14.3	2	28.6	1	14.3	1	14.3	7
Good College atmosphere	19	50.0	7	18.4	5	13.2	2	5.3	5	13.2	38
Total	69	27.8	56	22.6	55	22.2	39	15.7	29	11.7	248

Q13. How useful were the Learner Agreement (ISLA) forms in setting and monitoring your targets for the year so far?

1.....	20.0%
2.....	8.6%
3.....	25.7%
4.....	17.1%
5.....	2.9%
<i>Response 74.3%</i>	

Q14. How useful has the ISLA process been so far in helping you progress/ succeed in your course?

1.....	20.0%
2.....	12.9%
3.....	24.3%
4.....	14.3%
5.....	2.9%
<i>Response 74.3%</i>	

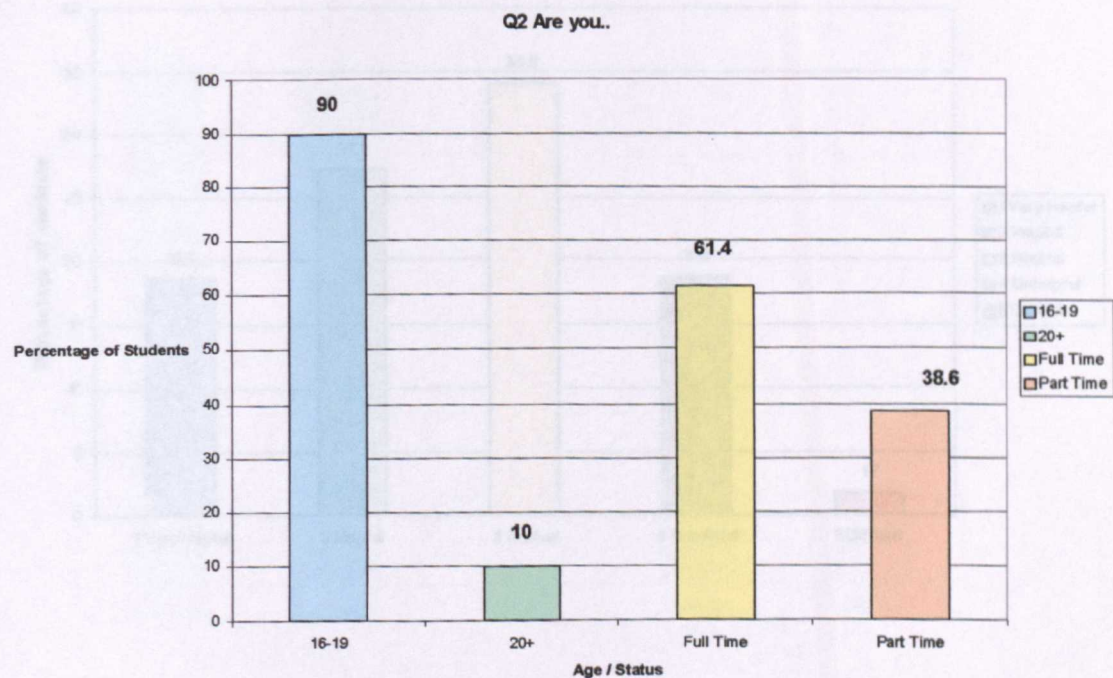
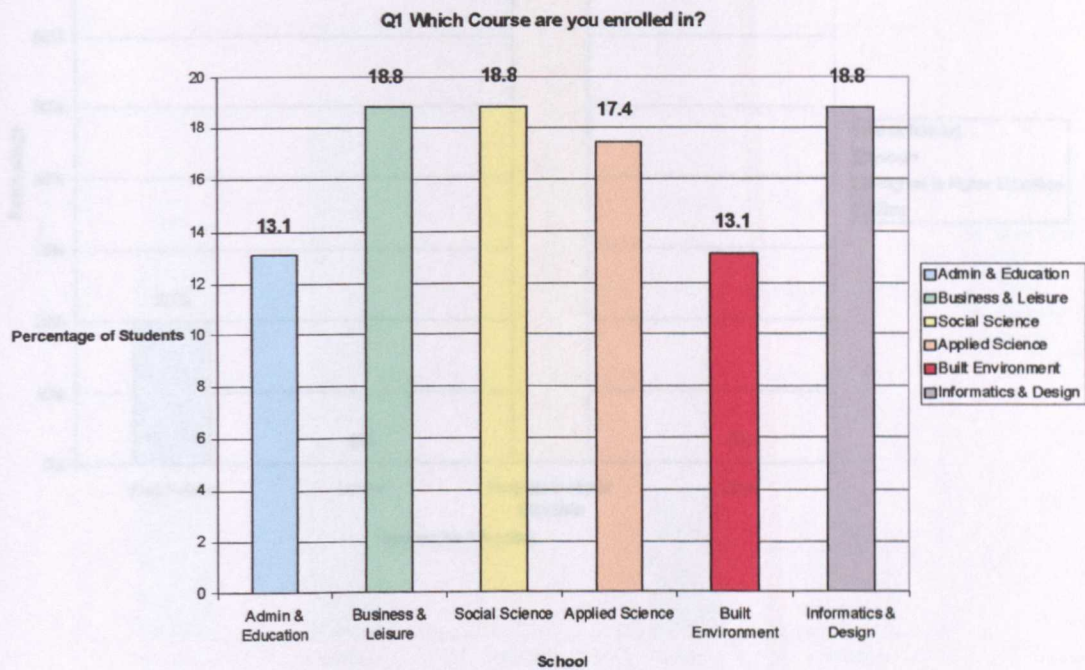
Q15. What can the institute do to improve student support and guidance?

Response 12.9%

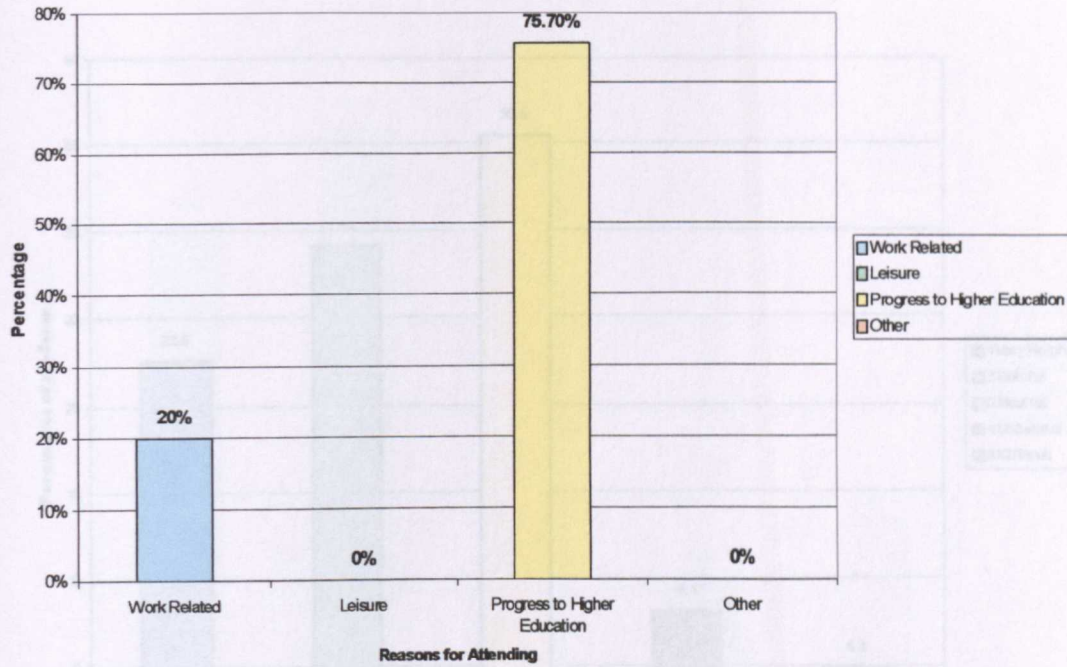
Q16. Any other comments? - Please use comment Box below

Response 40.0%

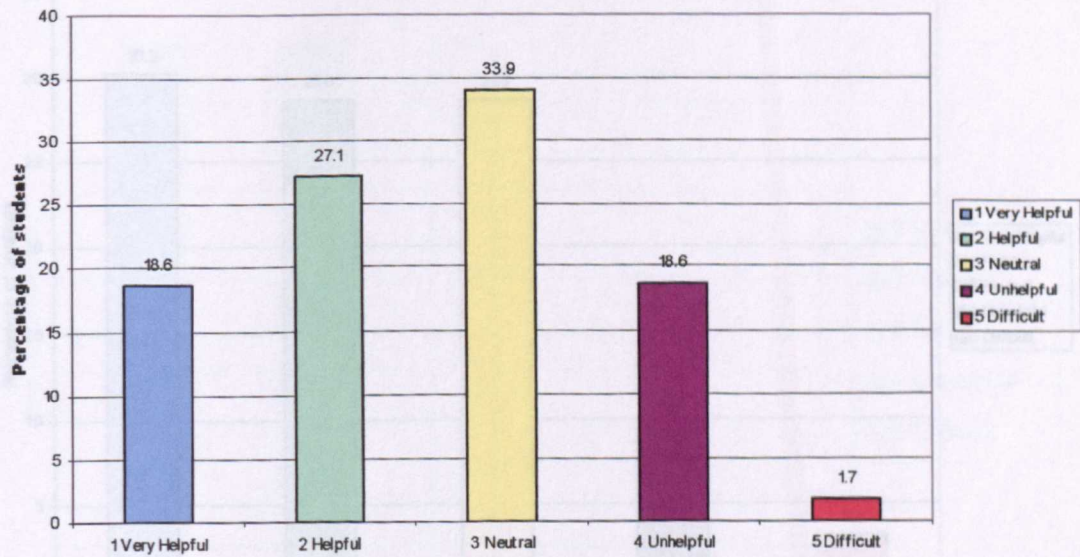
APPENDIX 5.2 Graphical Representation for Data from Appendix 5.1



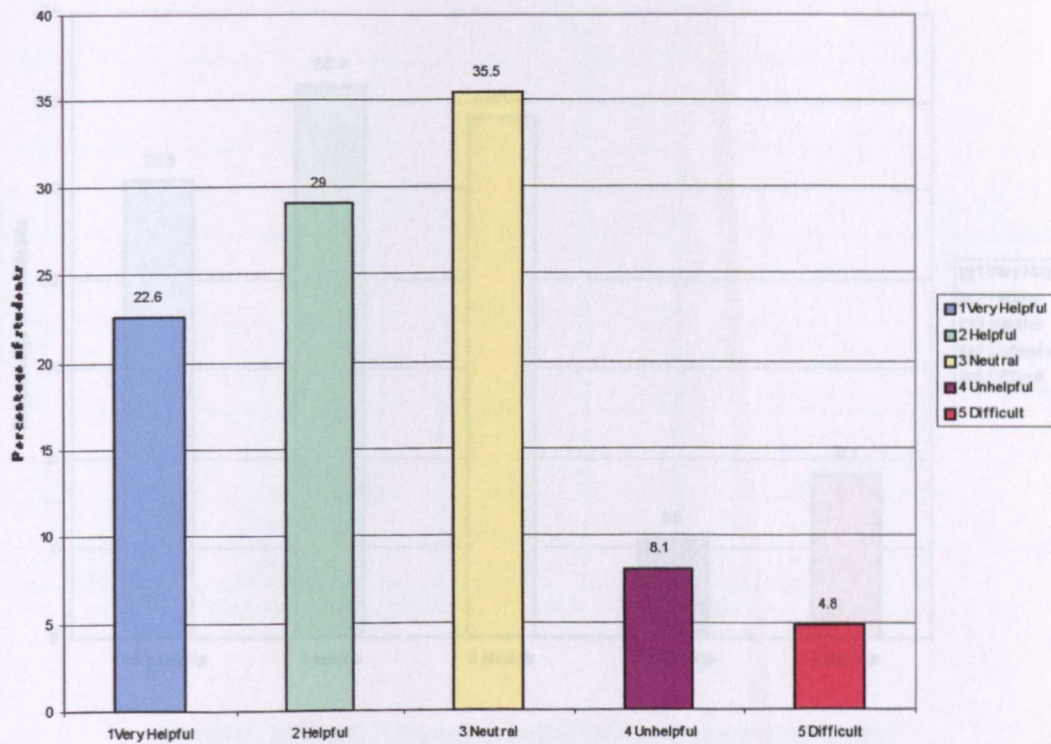
Q3 What are your reasons for attending?



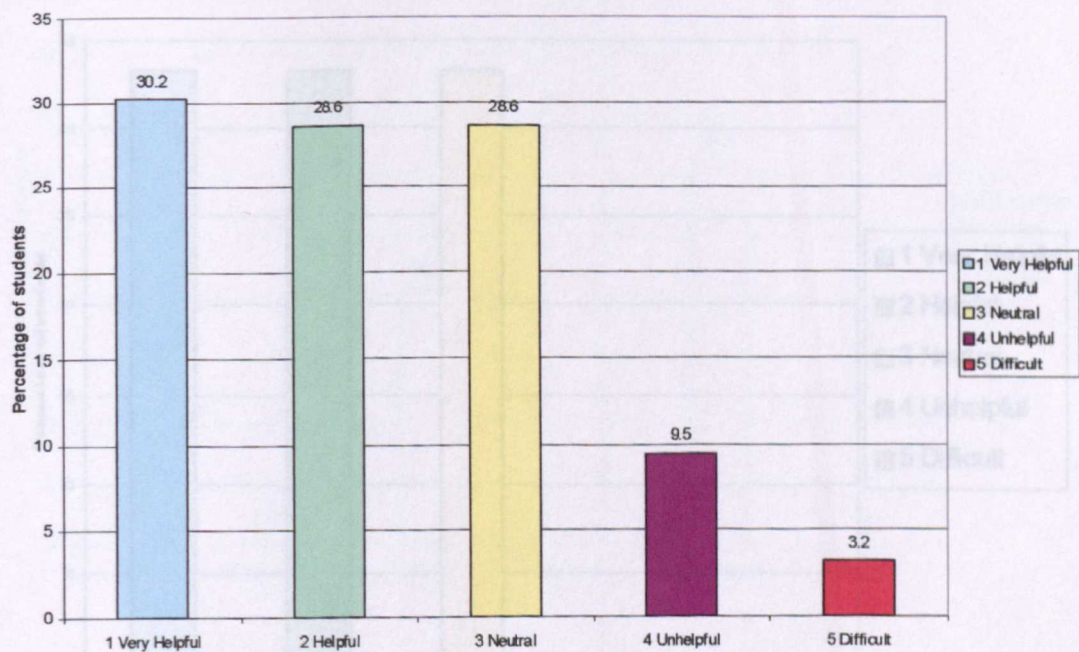
Q4 Financial: In relation to attendance, has Financial factors helped it or made it difficult



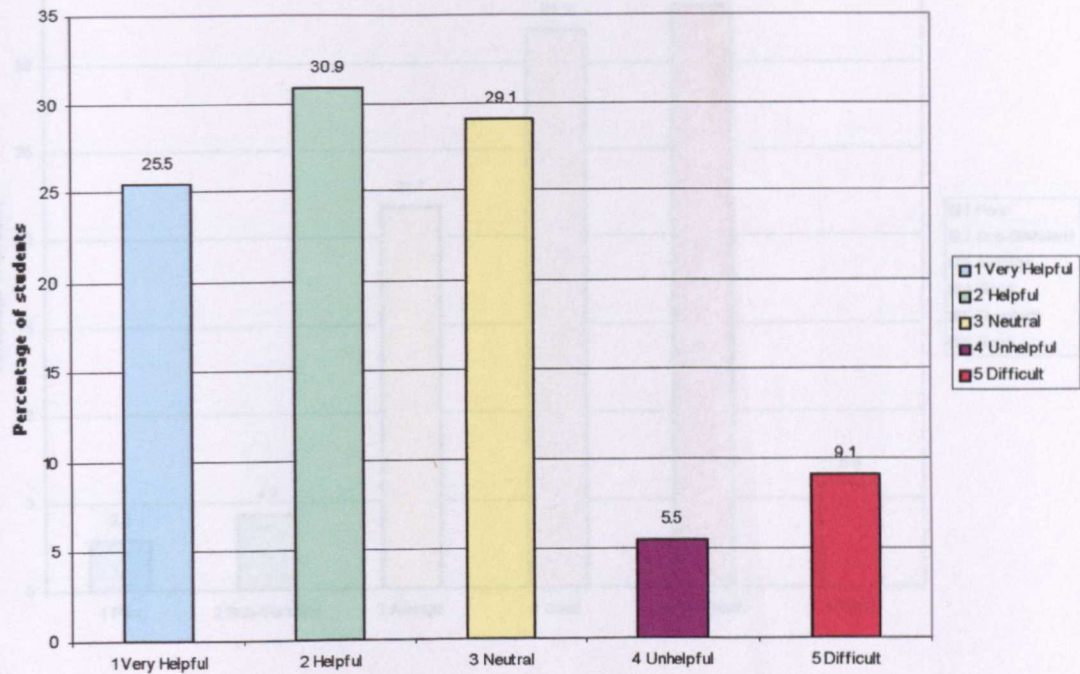
Q4 Personal: In relation to attendance, has personal factors helped it or made it difficult



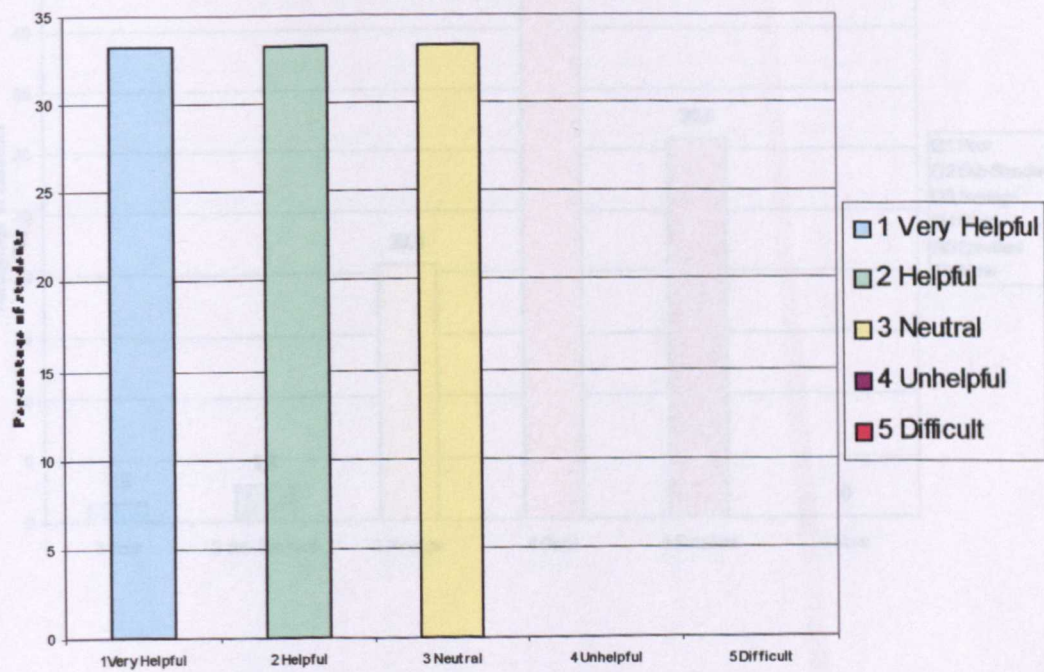
Q4 Support: In relation to attendance, has support factors helped or made it difficult



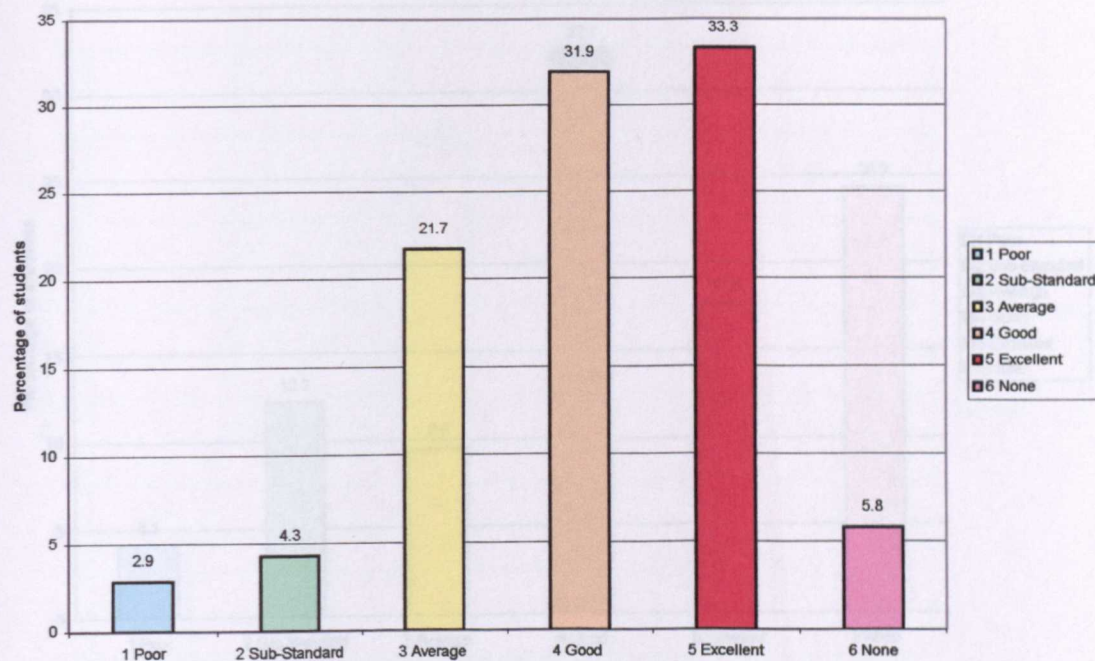
Q4 Organisational: In relation to attendance, has organisational factors helped or made it difficult



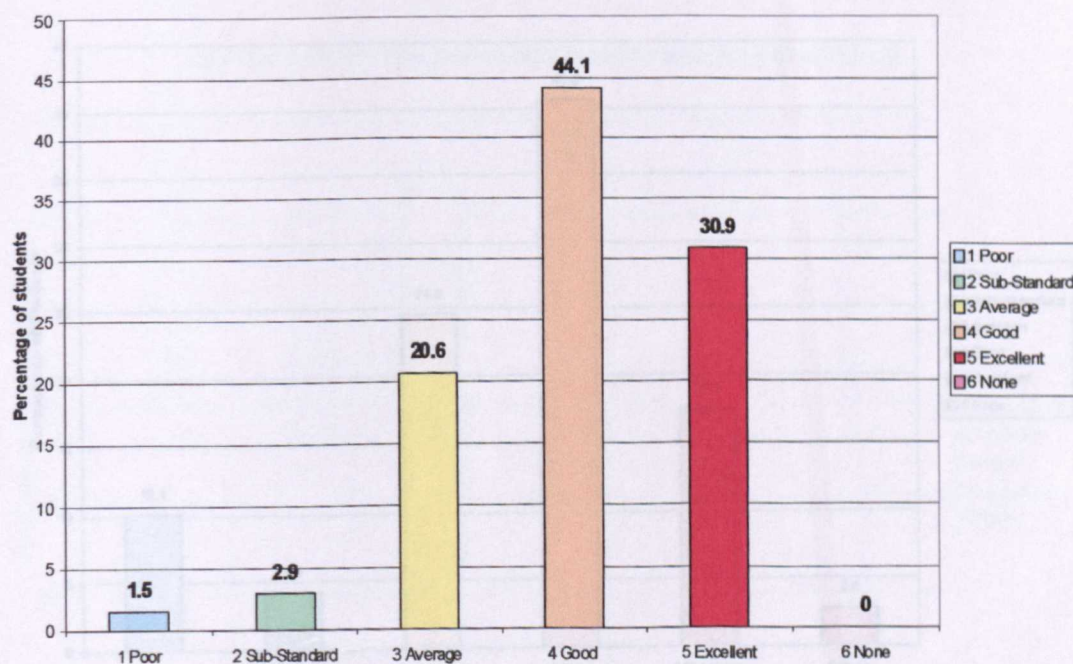
Q4 Other factors: In relation to attendance, has other factors helped it or made it difficult



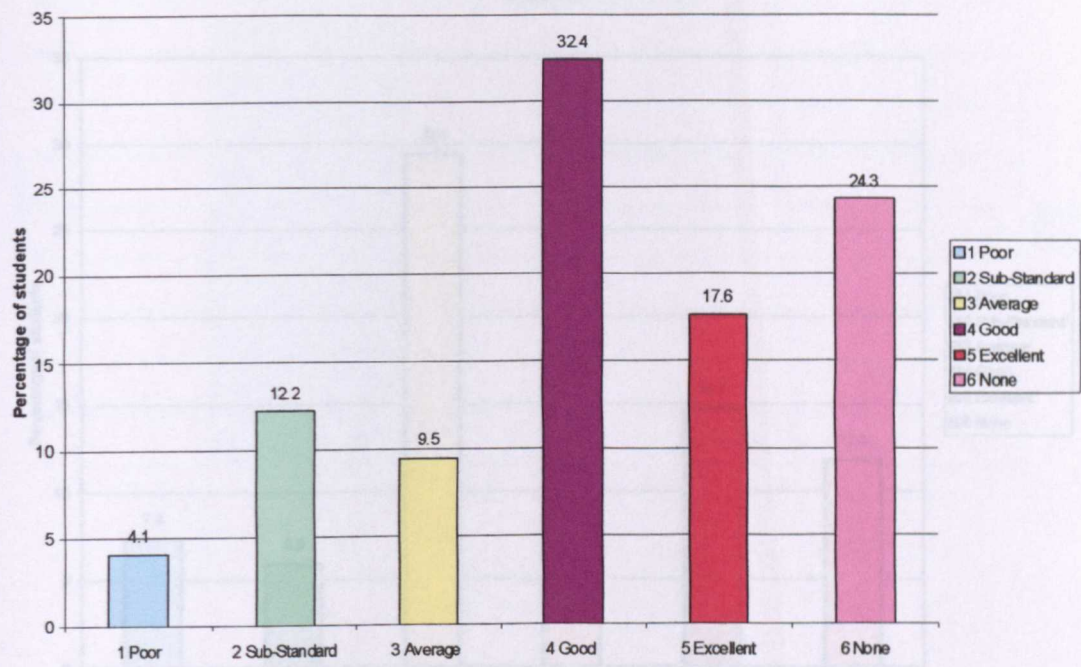
Q5 CHOICE OF COURSE: How good was induction advice in relation to Choice of Course



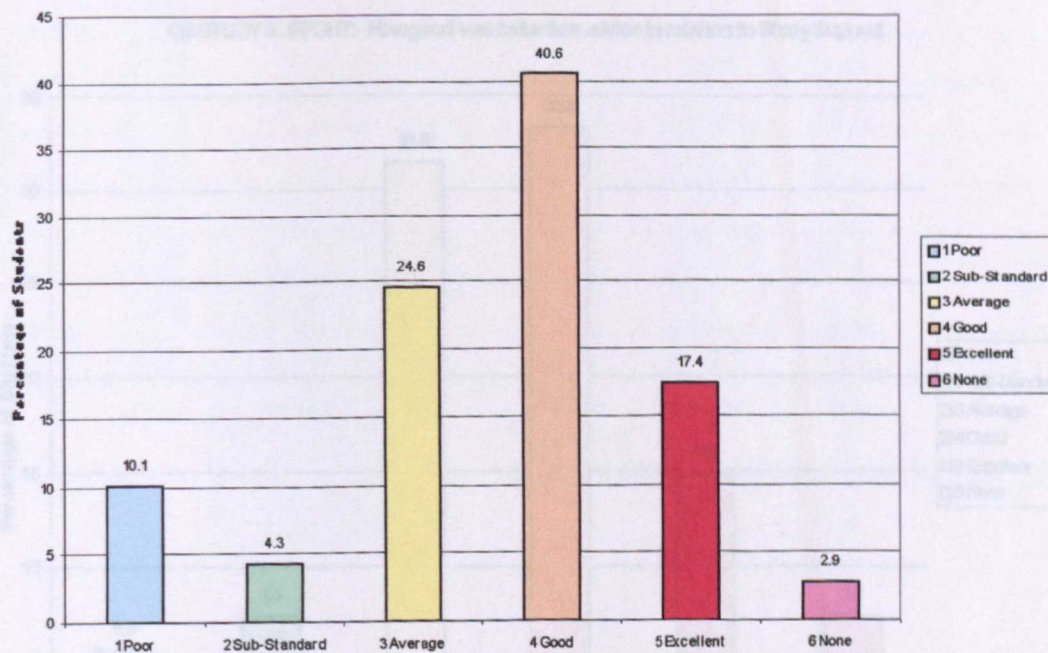
Q5 COURSE CONTENT: How good was induction advice in relation to Course content



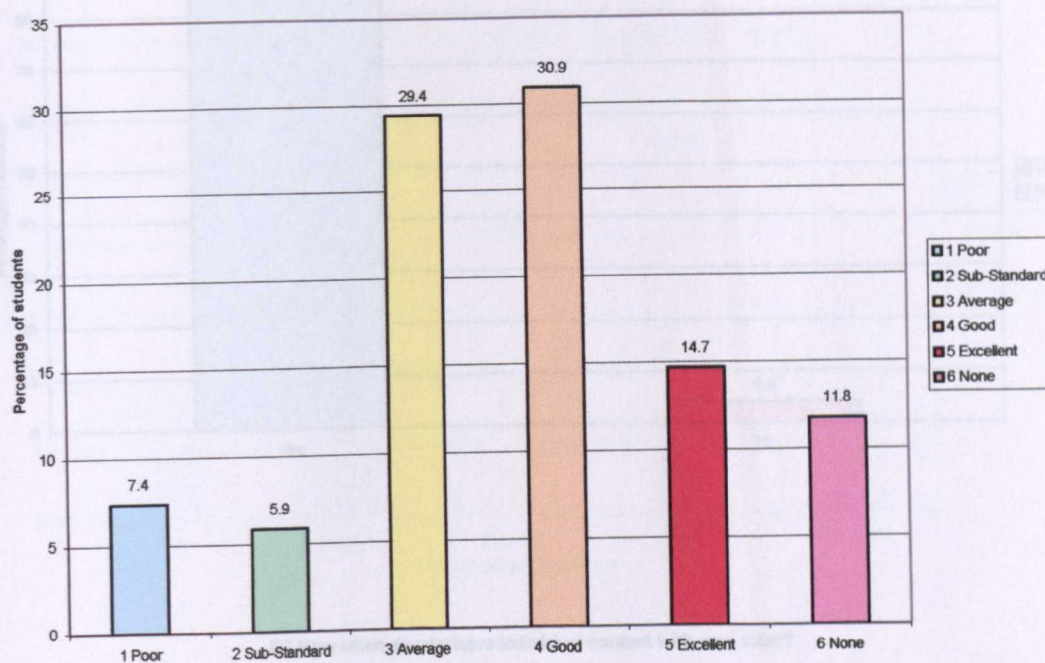
Q5 CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: How good was Induction advice in relation to Career opportunities



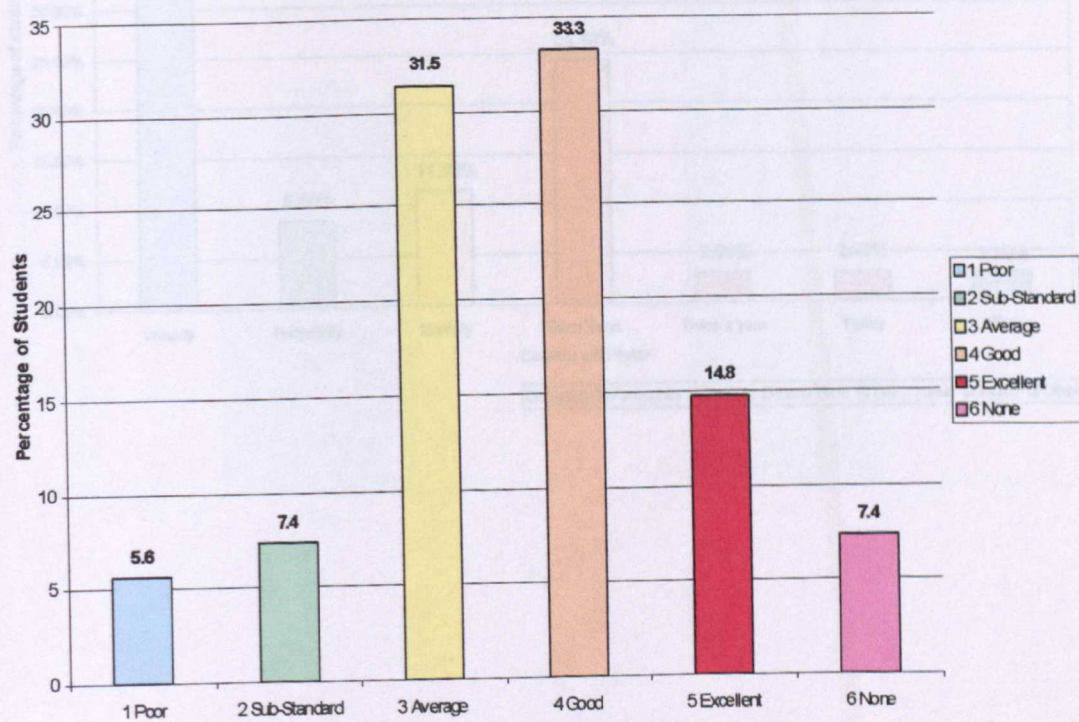
Q5 TIMETABLE: How good was Induction advice in relation to the Timetable



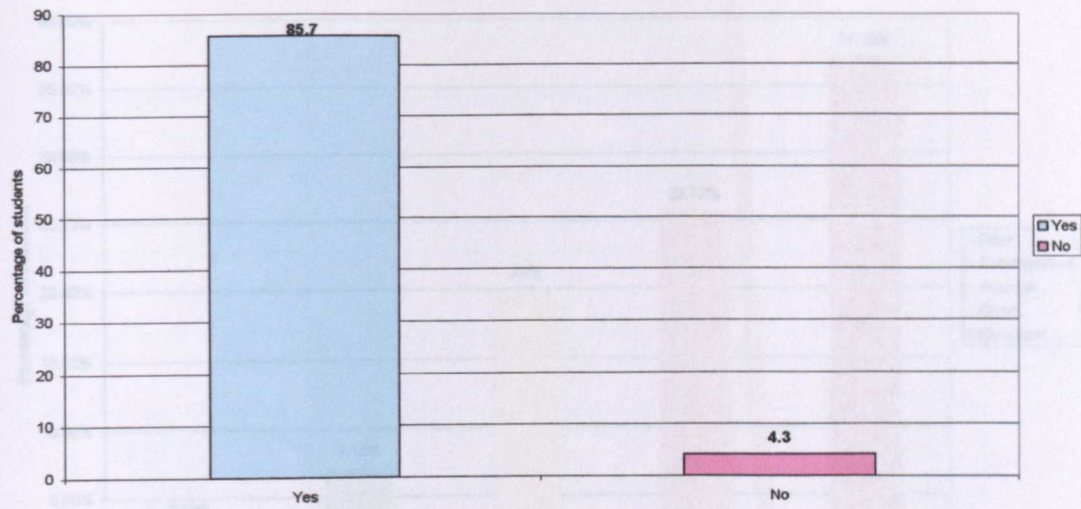
Q5 FINANCIAL SUPPORT: How good was Induction advice in relation to Financial Support



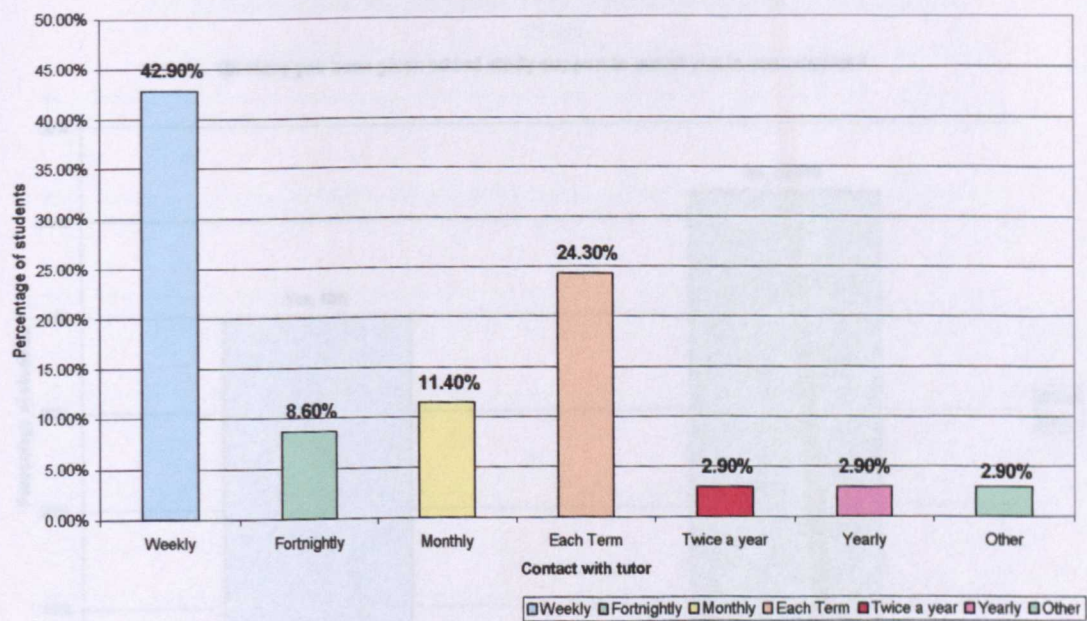
Q5 STUDY SUPPORT: How good was Induction advice in relation to Study Support



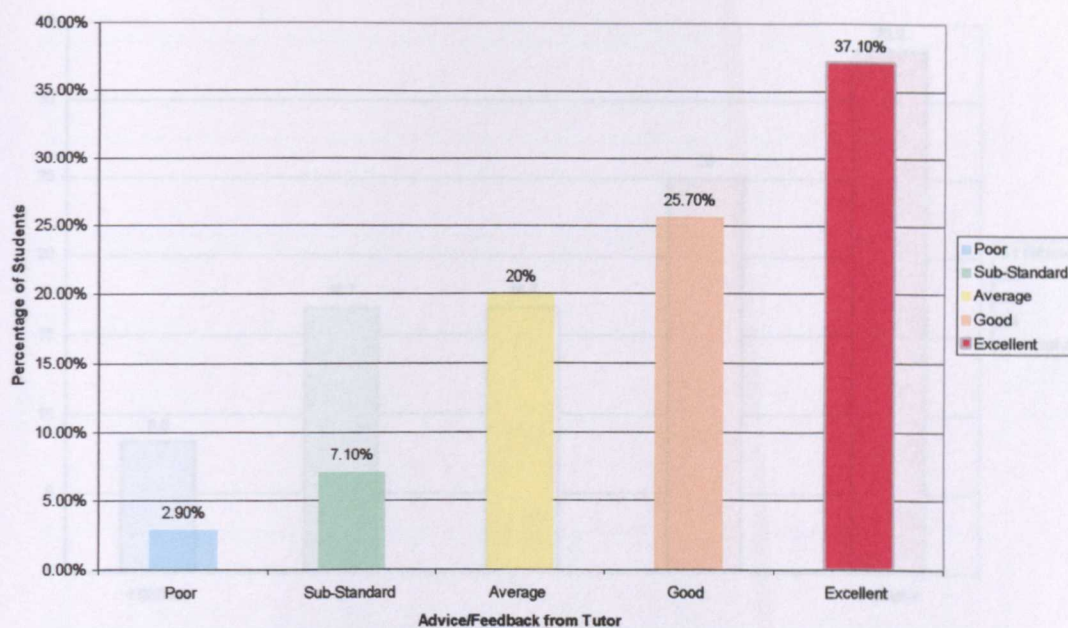
Q6 Do you think your chosen course was correct for you?



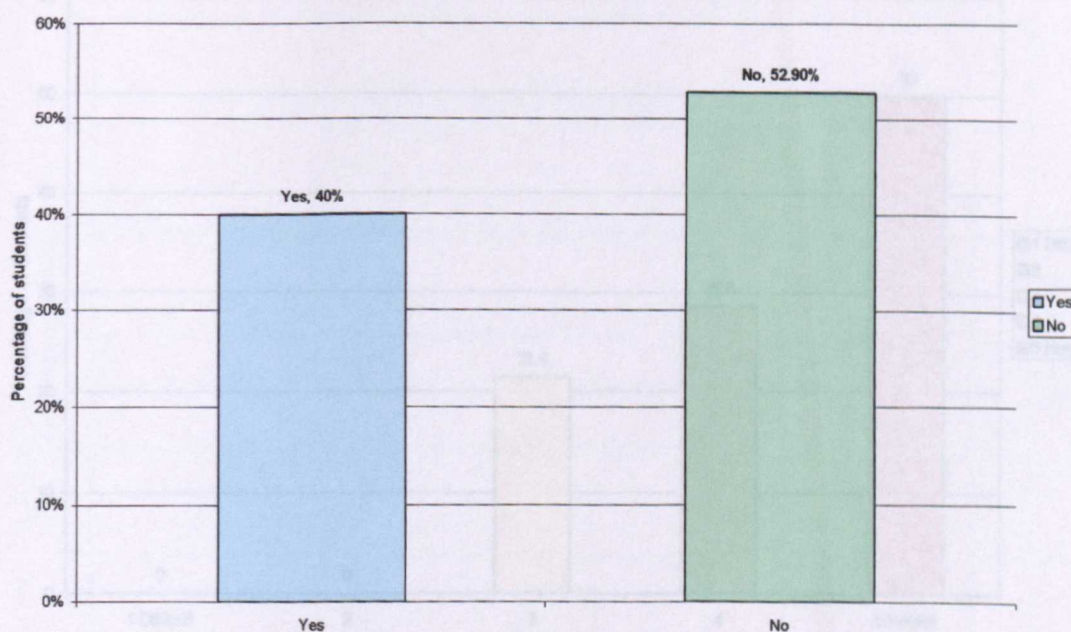
Q7 How often do you have individual contact with your tutor?



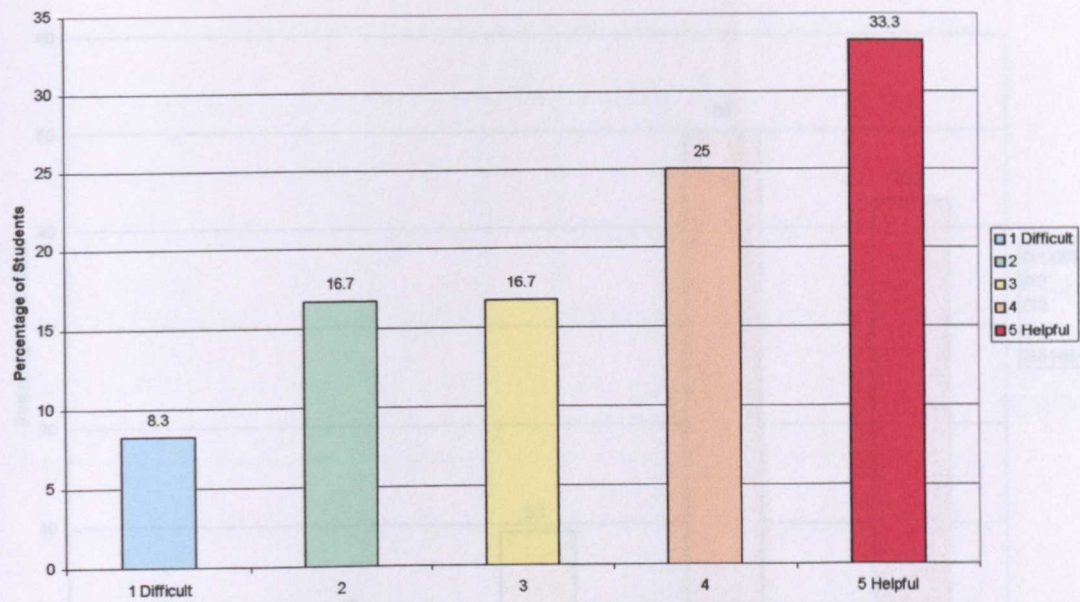
Q8 Regarding the discussions with your tutors, please estimate how useful was the advice/feedback that you received?



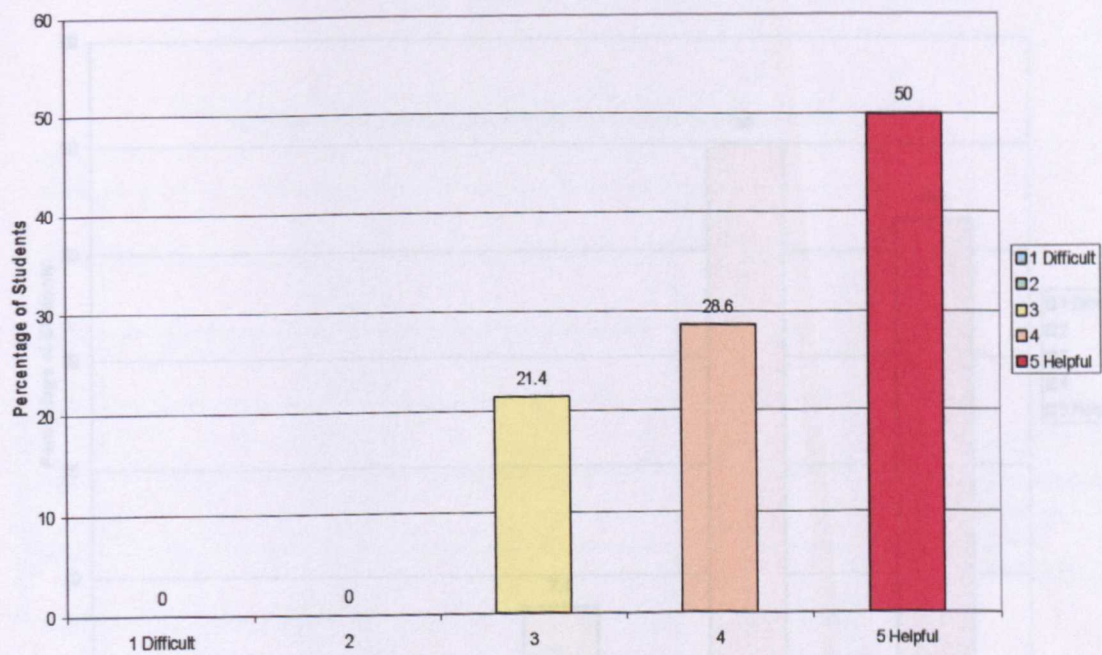
Q9 Have you been given added study support to assist you in your studies?



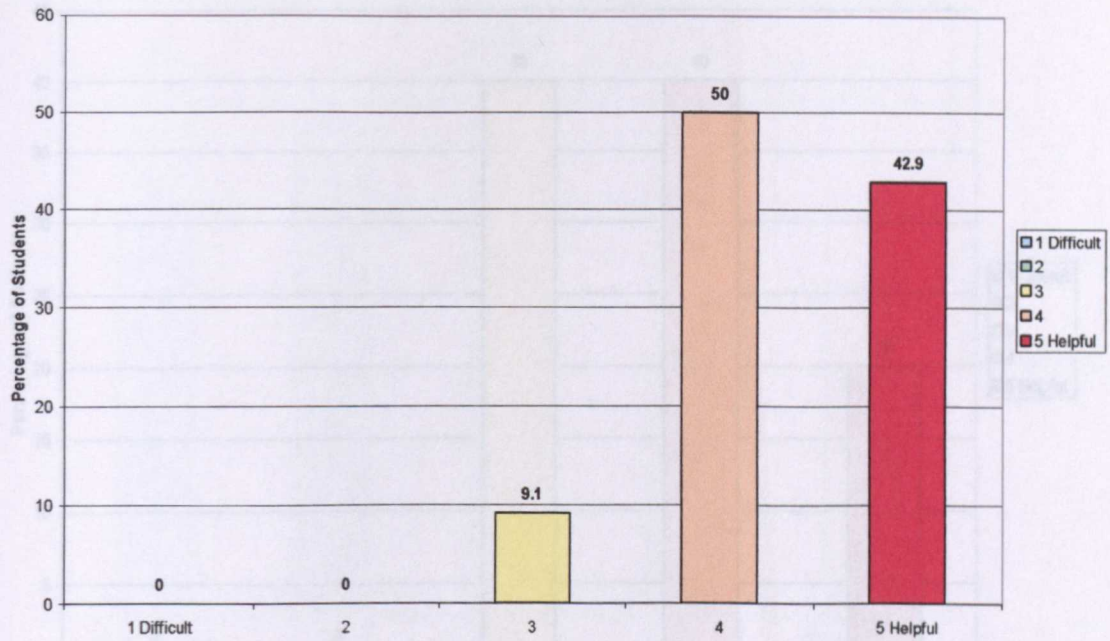
Q10 ICT: Regarding Attendance has ICT helped or made it more difficult



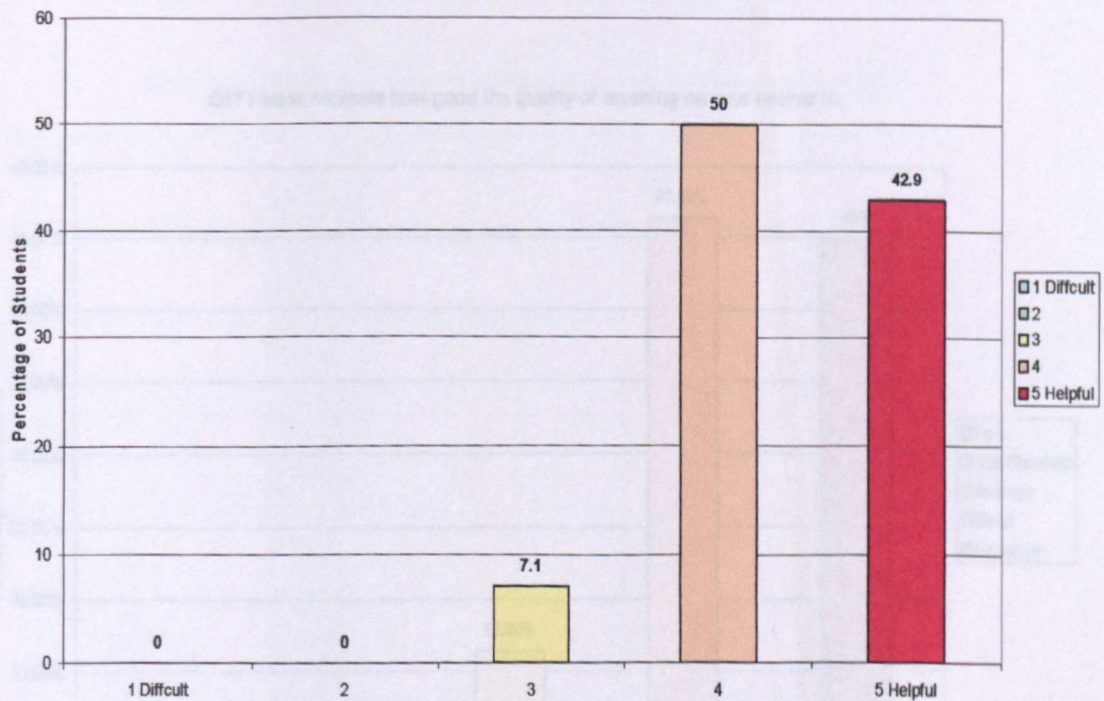
Q10 COMMUNICATION: Regarding attendance has Communication helped it or made it more difficult



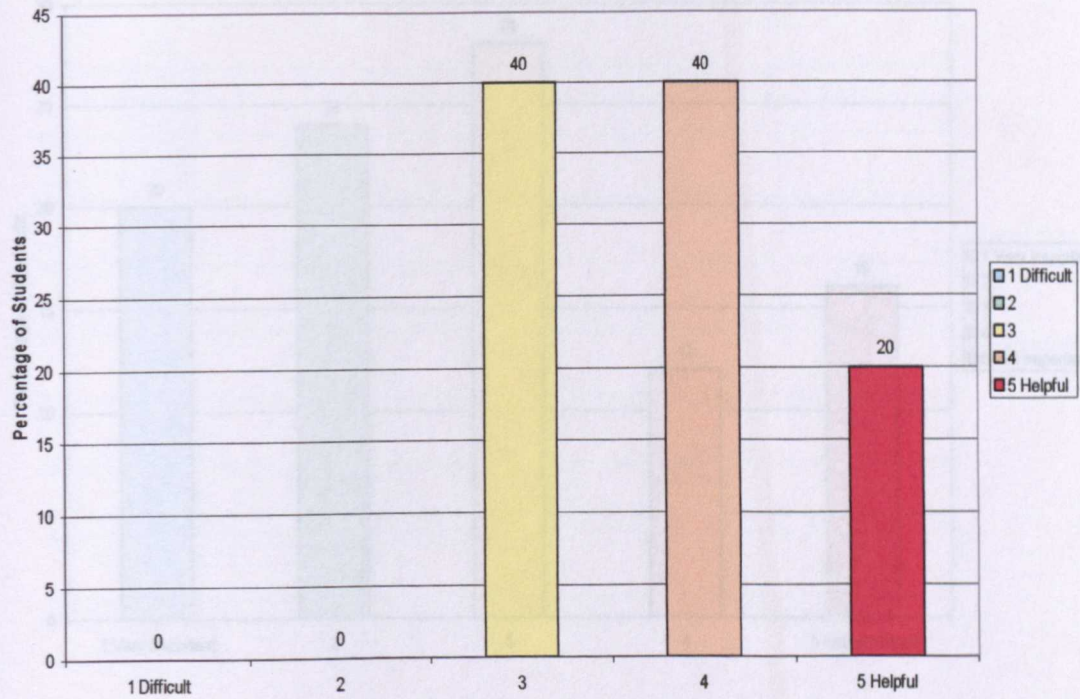
Q10 NUMERACY: Regarding Attendance, has Numeracy helped or made it more difficult



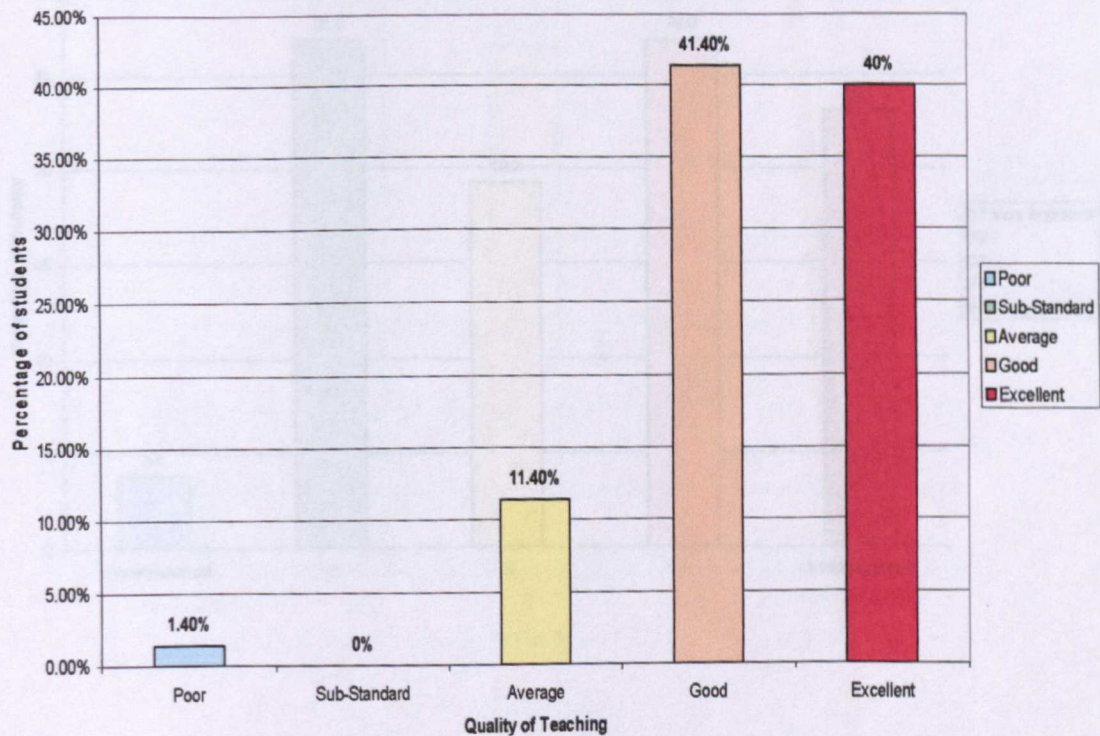
Q10 ATTENDANCE: Regarding Attendance has Basic Skills helped it or made it more difficult



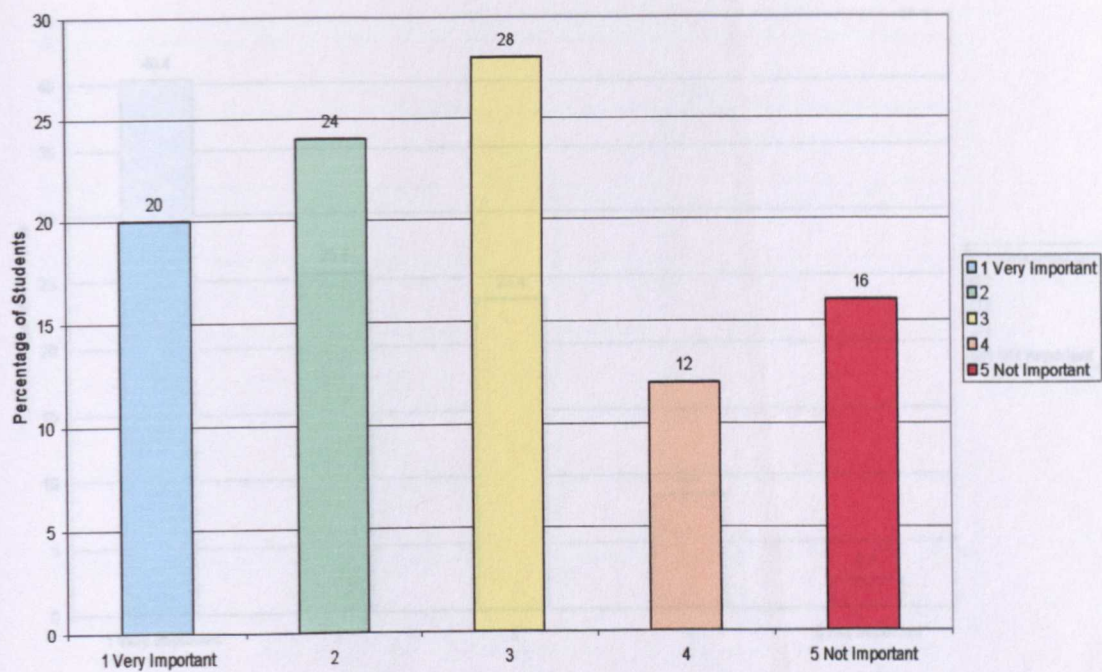
Q10 OTHER: Regarding Attendance, has Other factors helped or made it more difficult



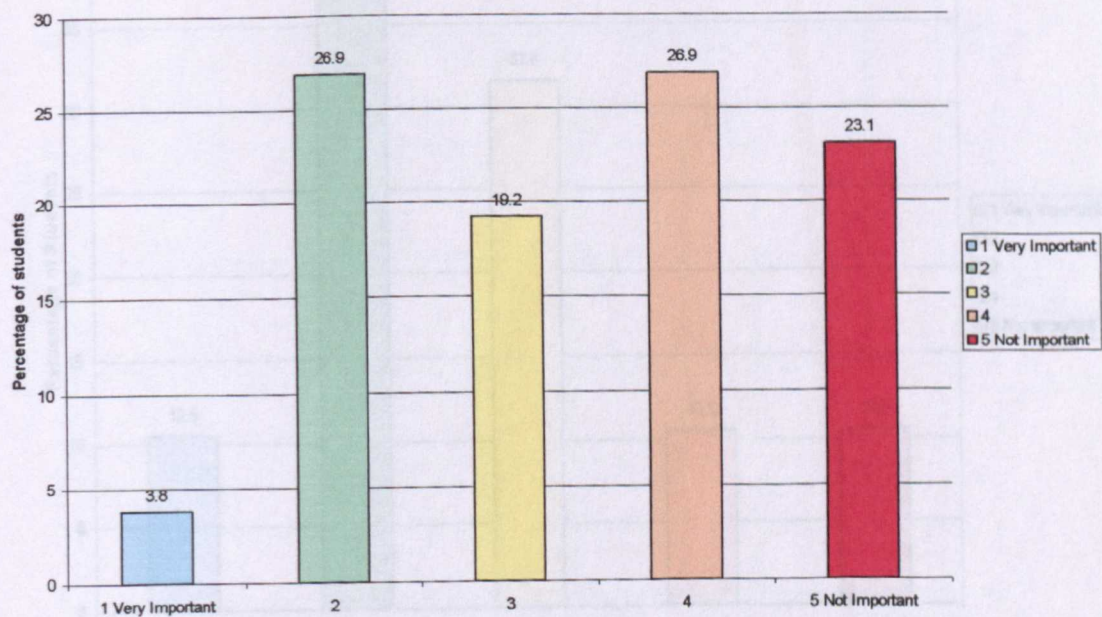
Q11 Please estimate how good the quality of teaching on your course is.



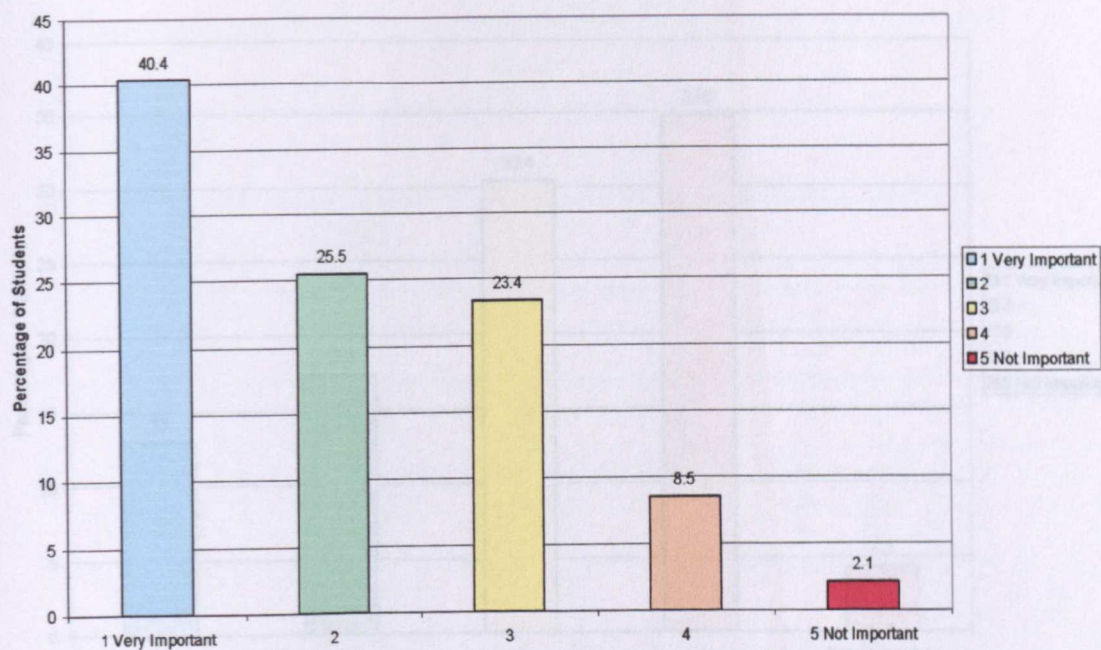
Q12 COURSE DESIGN: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



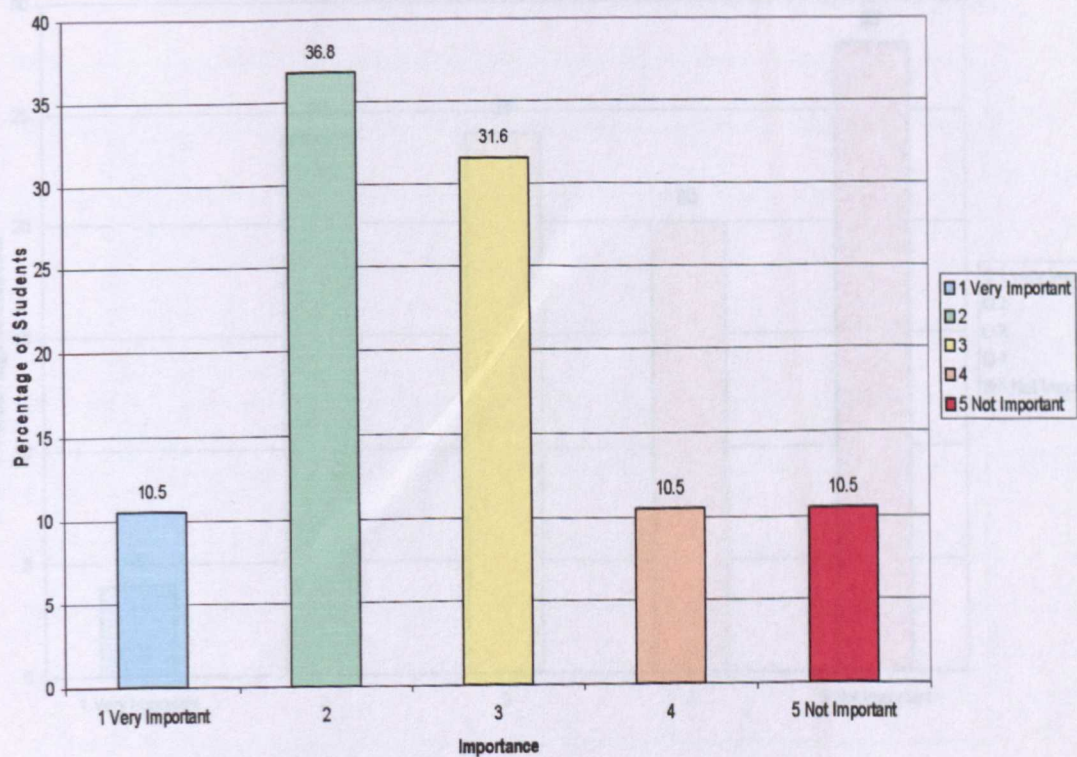
Q12 SUITABLE TIMETABLE: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



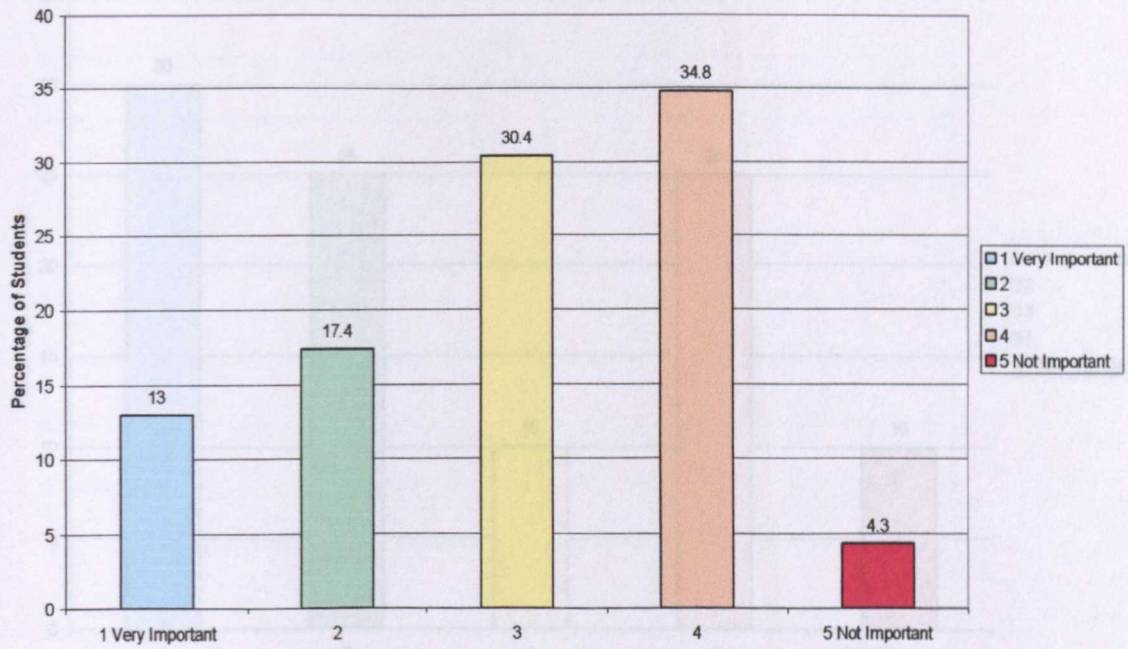
Q12 GOOD TEACHING: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



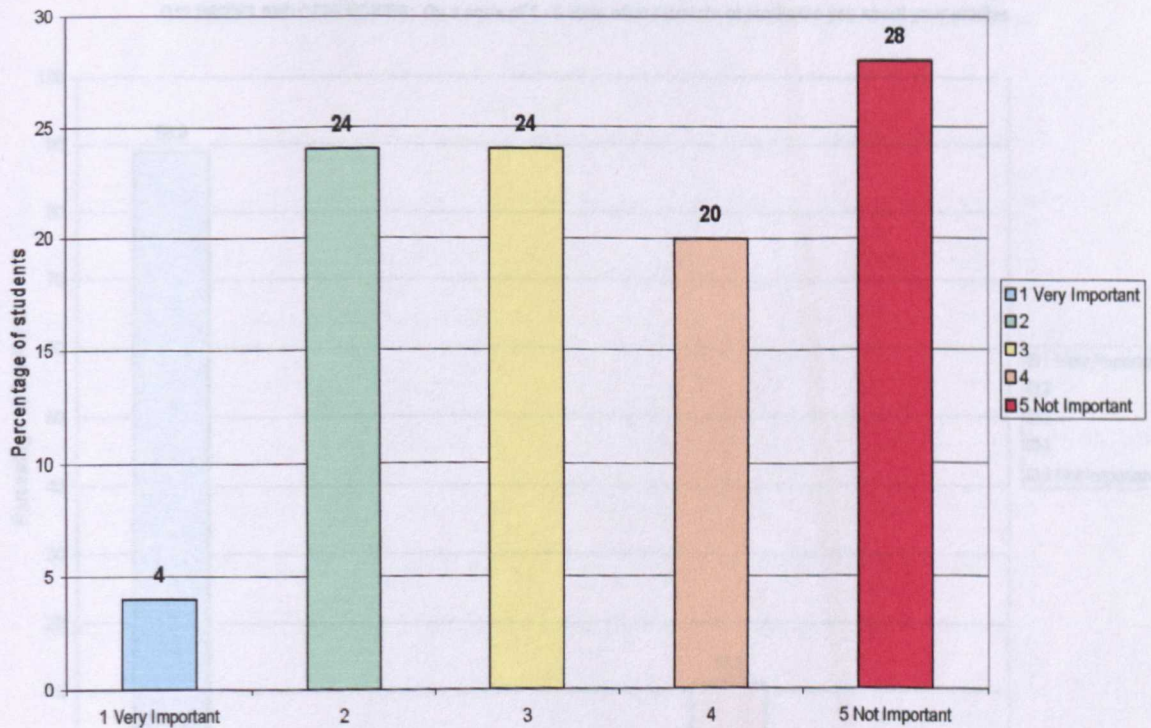
Q12 GOOD TUTOR SUPPORT AND ADVICE: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



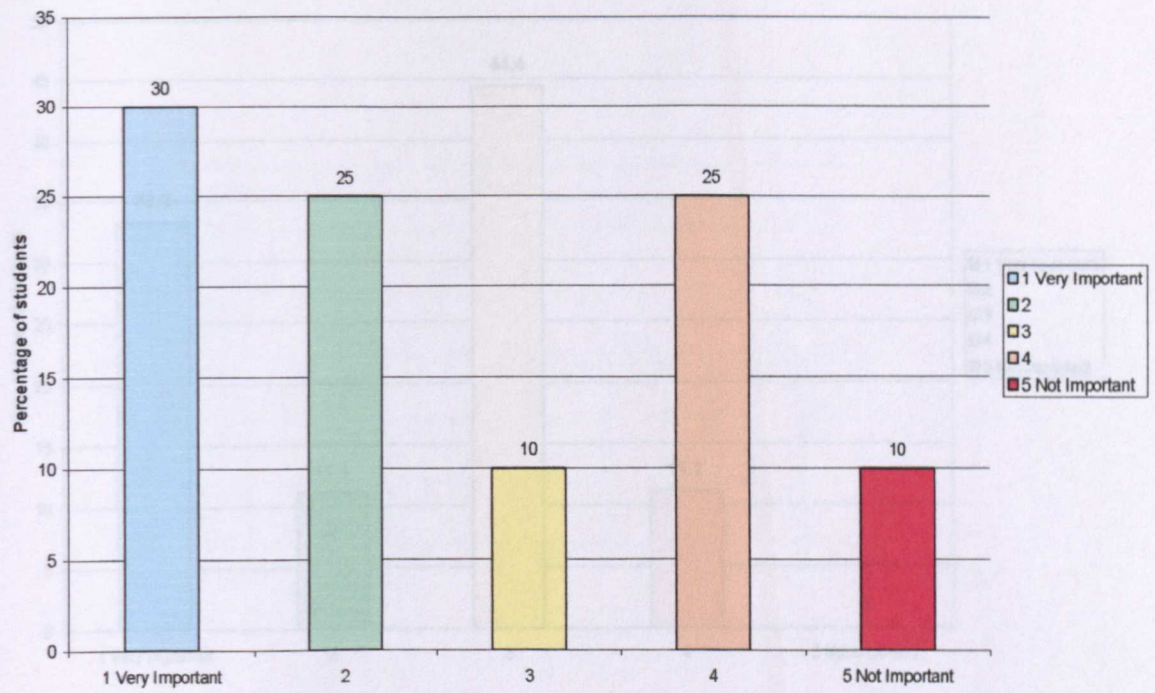
Q12 MEETING TARGETS AS SET BY YOUR TUTOR: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



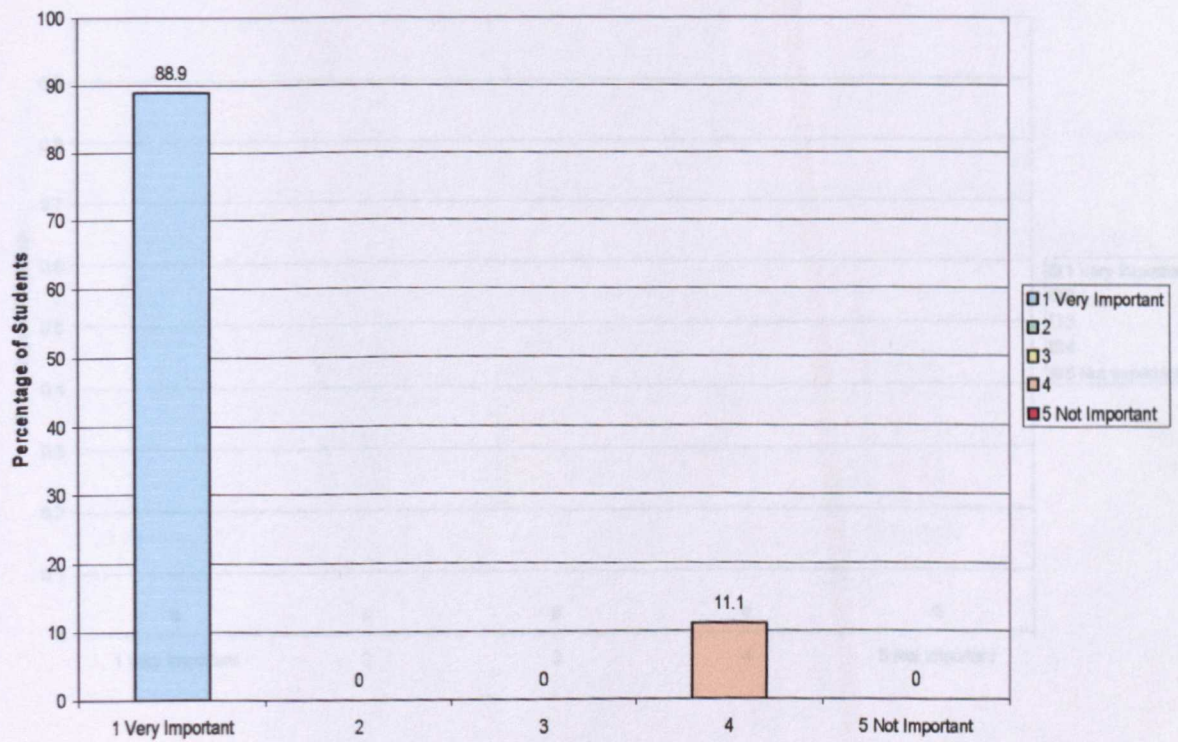
Q12 SUPPORT FROM FELLOW STUDENTS: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



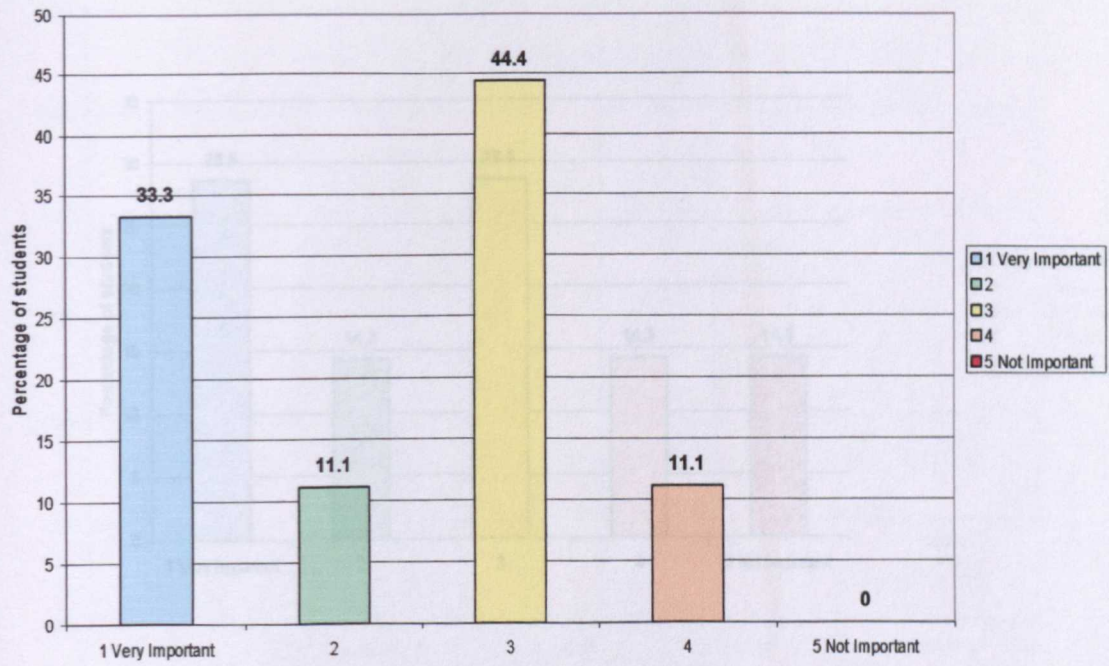
Q12 GOOD CAREERS ADVICE: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



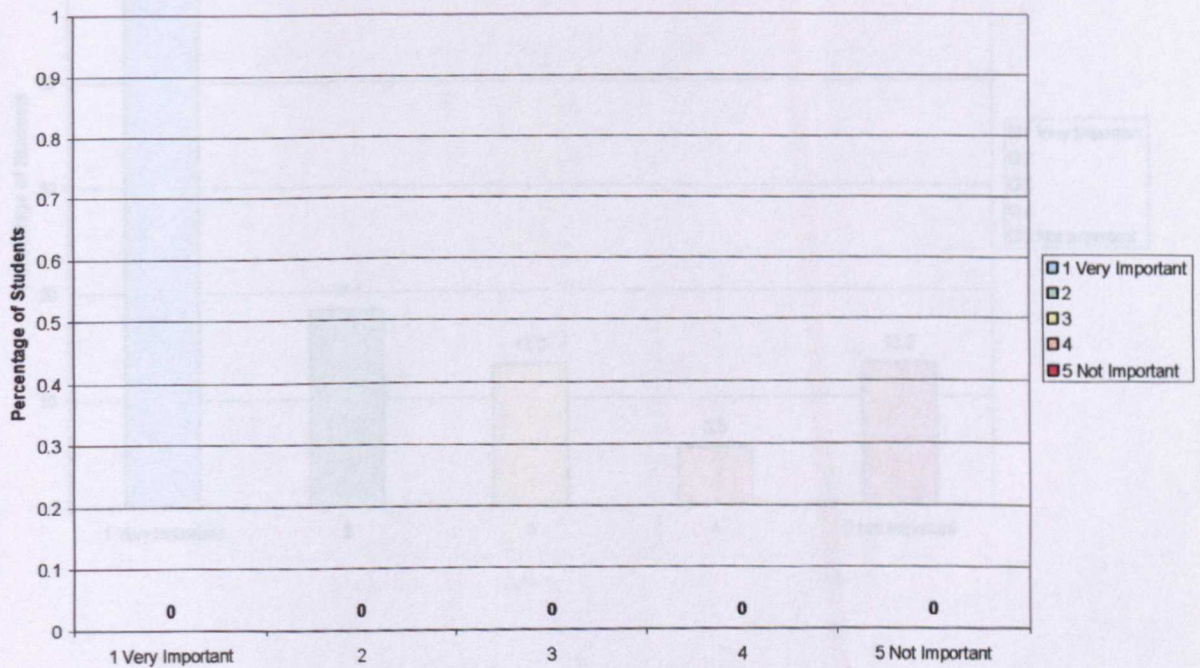
Q12 PRIZES AND CEREMONIES: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



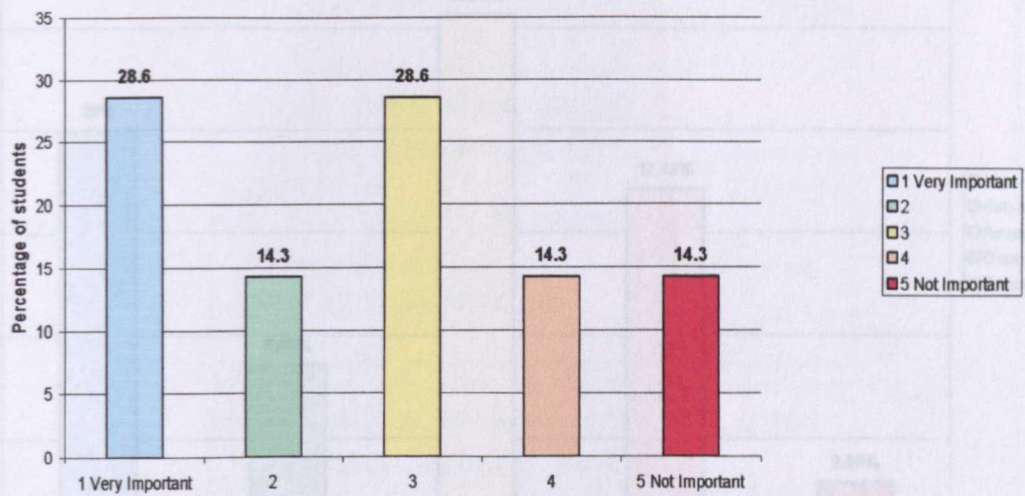
Q12 STUDENTS LEARNING CONTRACTS (ISLA): On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



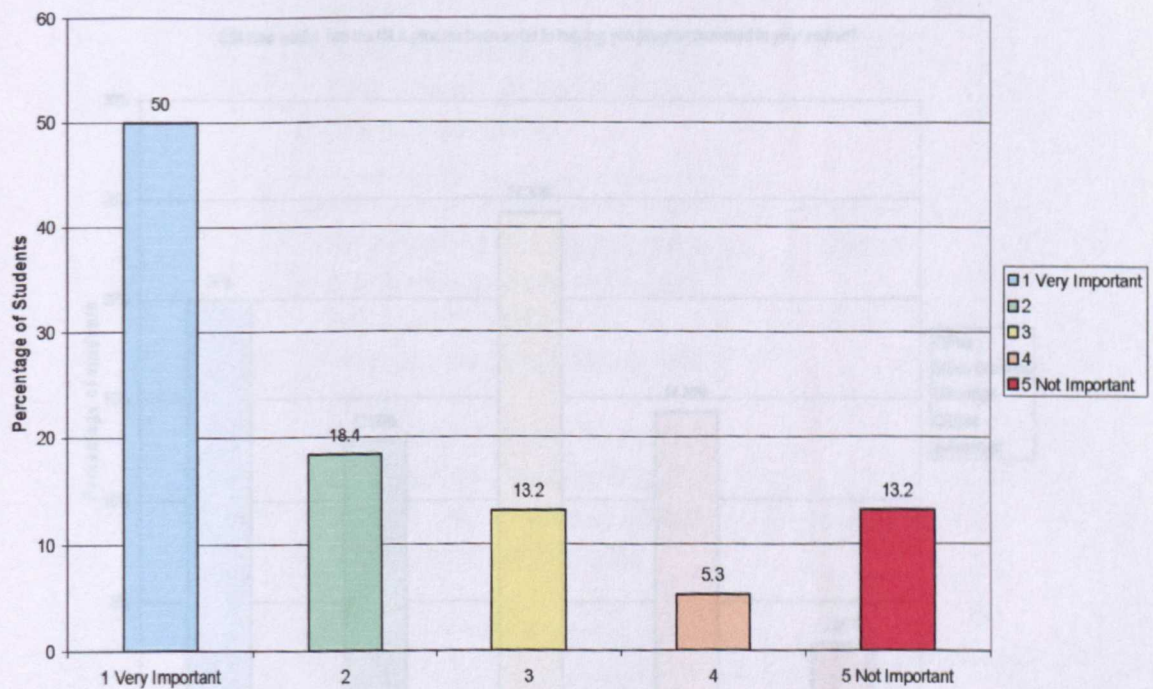
Q12 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



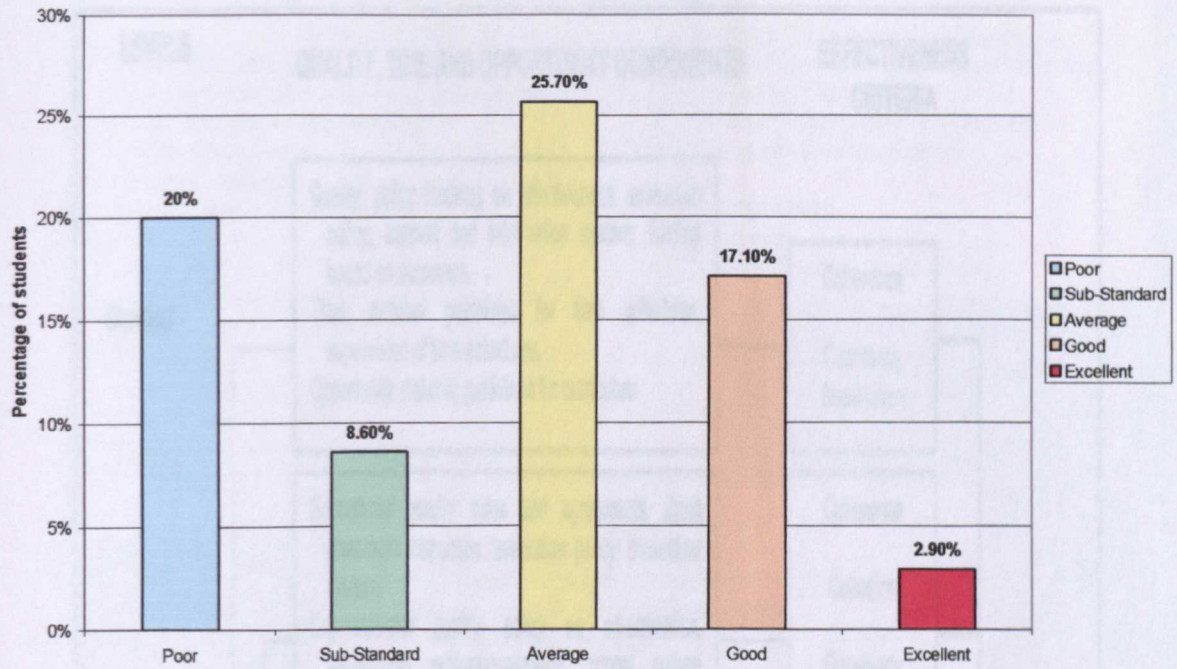
Q12 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies



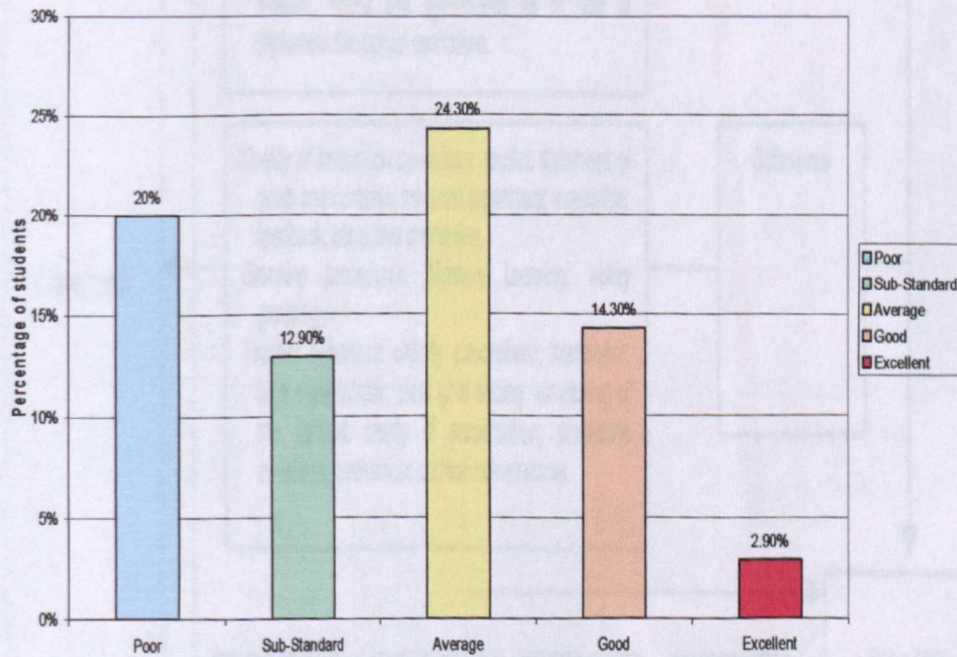
Q12 GOOD COLLEGE ATMOSPHERE: On a scale of 1 - 5 state what interests or motivates you about your studies

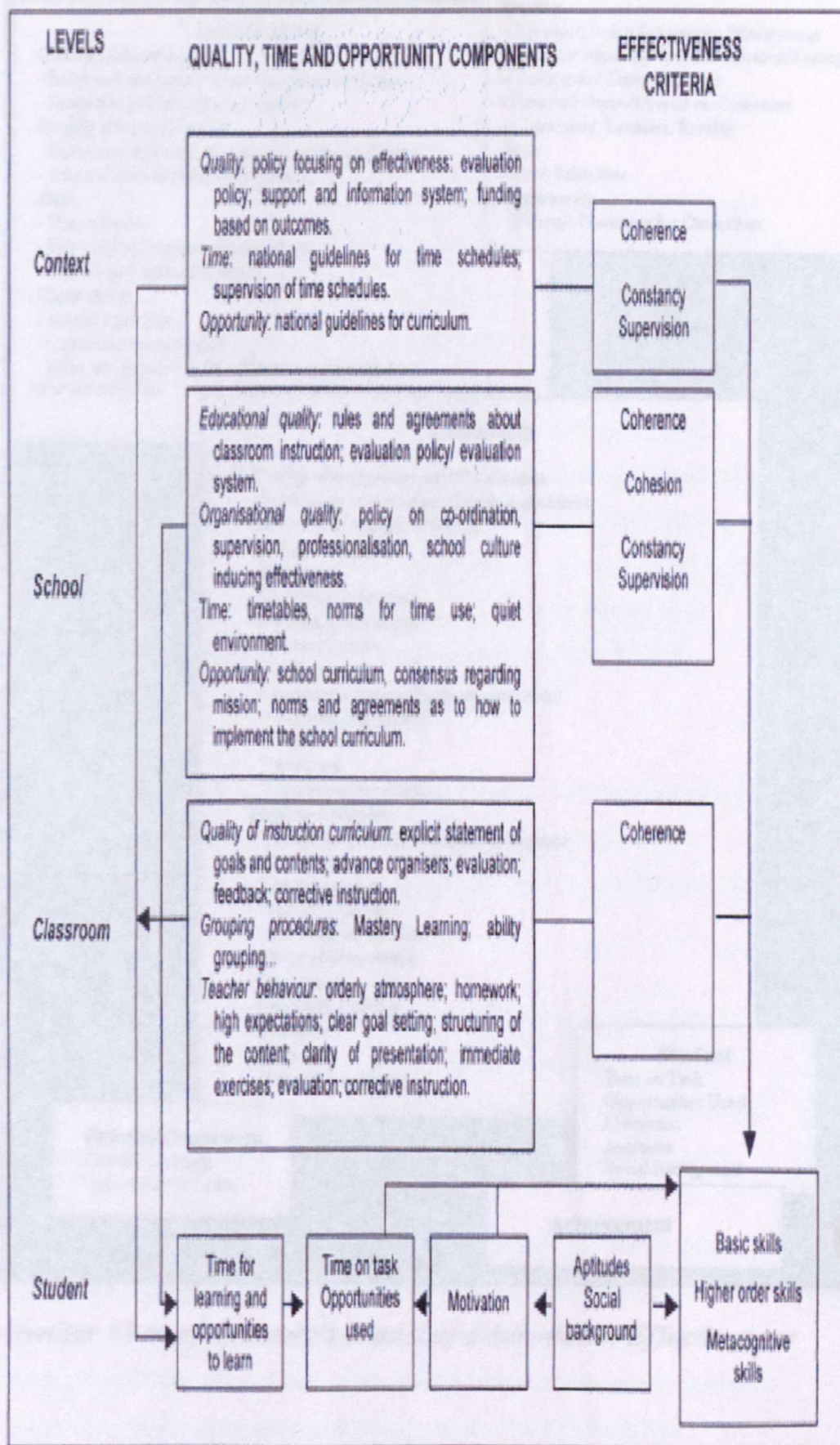


Q13 How useful were the learner agreement (ISLA) forms in setting and monitoring your targets for the year so far.

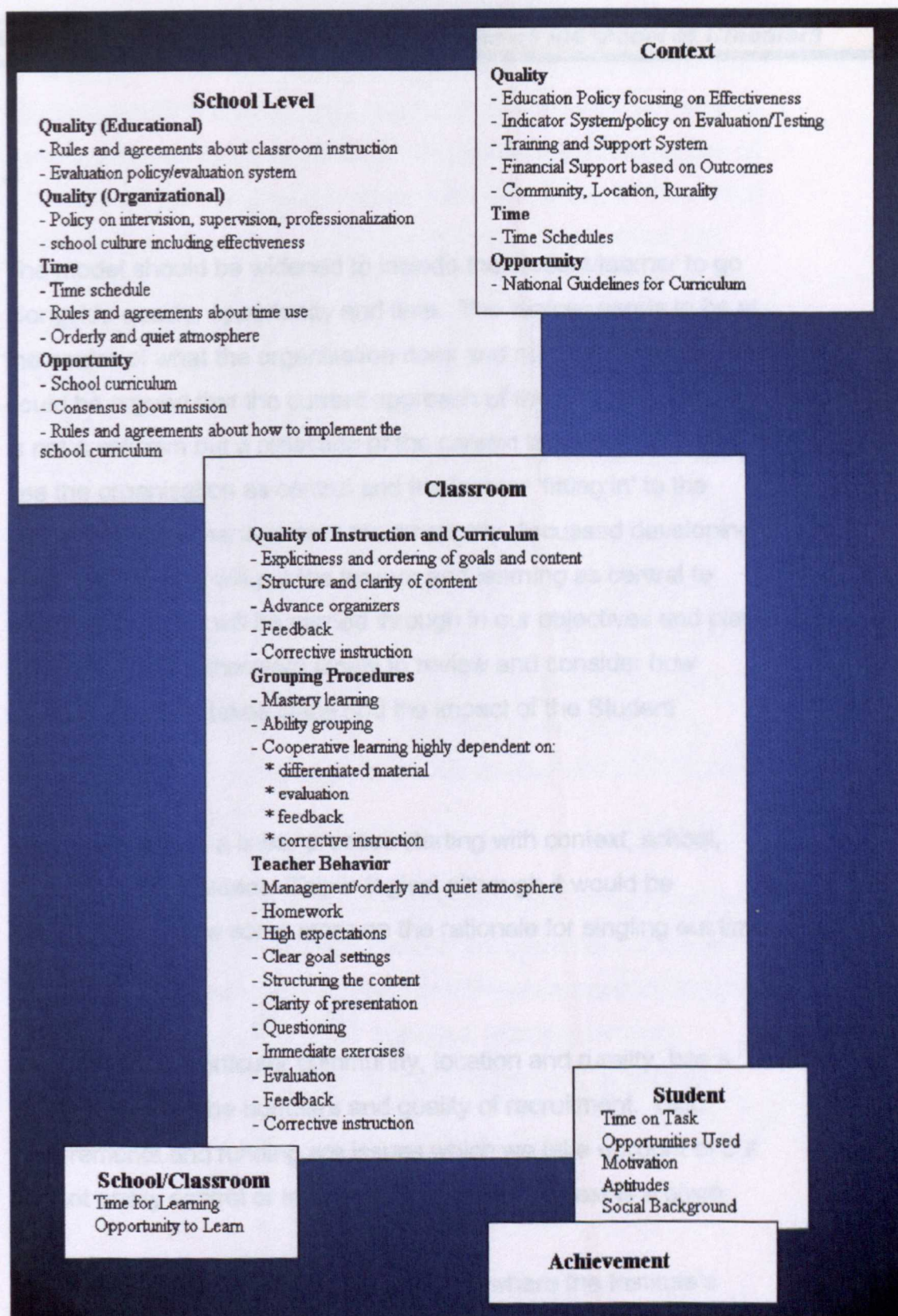


Q14 How useful has the ISLA process been so far in helping you progress/succeed in your course?





Creemer's School Effectiveness Model (1994 page 119).



Another View of Creemer's Model of Educational Effectiveness

college learning. However, when discussing quality it is important to be more precise about what this means. As indicated in paragraph one, the institution will take forward work on effective learning, teaching and those indirect factors that can impact and

“

The model should be widened to include the student/learner to go alongside quality, opportunity and time. The learner needs to be at the centre of what the organisation does and not vice versa. It could be argued that the current approach of the Institute, and this is not a criticism but a reflection of the context that we work in, may see the organisation as central and the learner ‘fitting in’ to the processes. The management team recently discussed developing new values which will put the learner and learning as central to what we do. This will be carried through in our objectives and plans for 2005-06. It is therefore timely to review and consider how effective learning takes place and the impact of the Student Centred Pathway.

The model shows a linear process starting with context, school, classroom and student. This is logical although it would be interesting to know some more on the rationale for singling out time and opportunity.

The context, in particular community, location and rurality, has a major impact on the numbers and quality of recruitment. DEL requirements and funding are issues which we take account of but cannot easily control or influence. Hence the context is a given.

School level, for which read ‘Institute’, are where the Institute’s values, policies and procedures impact on the learning process. The Institute is not prescriptive about ‘rules and agreements’ on college lecturing. However, when discussing quality it is important to be more precise about what this means. As indicated in paragraph one, the Institute will take forward work on effective learning, tutoring and those indirect factors that can impact and

ensure that learning takes place – such as advice, guidance, funding etc. It is likely that an outcome may be a policy on what is effective teaching and learning, structures to allow dissemination of good practice on issues such as initial assessment, tutoring, use of ILT, assessment, dealing with mixed ability learners etc. This leads directly to the ‘classroom’ stage of the model. It is here that the features of quality as it affects learning should be the focus of what we do. Increasingly, there has been a subtle shift from teaching to learning (see ETI’s IQRS standards). Although one could argue that the former is a necessary condition for learning to take place, emphasis on activities that result in learning may occur outside the classroom. For example, do we take enough account of learning that happens in the learning centres? What about those tutors who use Blackboard with students with elements of distance learning? Learning takes place but in addition to the learning that happens in the classroom. Again, the same could be argued for homework and assignment work. These are important elements that can contribute to student learning but are not directly affected by what happens in the classroom.

In summary, the quality stage of the model needs to focus on learning – some of which takes place in the classroom and some which occurs elsewhere. Managers and lecturers need to recognise that increasingly learning is our business; learning involves teaching which is a major, but not the only part of the process.

”

"AT RISK" Questionnaire

Score	Questions
	What is your age group at entry to the college/institute? 16-18 <input type="radio"/> 19-21 <input type="radio"/> 21+ <input type="radio"/>
	2. What is the number of GCSEs at grade c or higher (or equivalent)? Less than 4 <input type="radio"/> 5-10 <input type="radio"/>
	3. What other qualifications do you have? 'A' levels <input type="radio"/> HND/HNC <input type="radio"/> Degree <input type="radio"/> other <input type="radio"/>
	4. Do you live ... At Home <input type="radio"/> In a Flat <input type="radio"/> other <input type="radio"/> ? (please specify)
	5. How many hours do you work in part time employment None <input type="radio"/> 1-10hrs. <input type="radio"/> 10-15 hrs. <input type="radio"/> 16hrs+ <input type="radio"/> ?
	6. How long does it take to travel to the college/institute Less than 15 mins. <input type="radio"/> 16mins – 60 mins. <input type="radio"/> More than one hour <input type="radio"/> ?
	7. How many hours per week will you devote to study on your proposed course Less than 10 <input type="radio"/> 11-15 <input type="radio"/> 16+ <input type="radio"/> ?
	8. Do you have or envisage having any problems with finance No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/>
	9. Did you begin your course because it did not require entry qualifications? No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/>
	10. Since coming to this institute, have you considered changing your programme? No <input type="radio"/> Yes, and I have changed <input type="radio"/> Yes, but I haven't changed <input type="radio"/>
	11. Did family expectations contribute to your reasons for choosing to study in Further & Higher Education? No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/>
	12. Would you say that one of the reasons for deciding to go to Further & Higher Education was that you didn't want to work full-time yet? Not True <input type="radio"/> True <input type="radio"/>
	13. Did you come here in order to study a particular Course? No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/>
	14. Did you choose to come here because it was convenient to home? No <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/>

“ AT RISK” Score Sheet

1.Age group	Points
16-18 years	0
19 to 21 years	2
Over 21 years	5

2. No of GCSEs (or equivalents)	Points
1-2	2
3	3
4-5	5
6 or more	9

3. Other qualifications	Points
'A' levels	10
HND/HNC	12
Degree	15
Other	12

4. Accommodation	Points
At home	10
Flat	0
Other	4

5. Hours of Employment	Points
None	10
1-10 hrs	8
11-15hrs	2
16hrs +	0

6. Commuting Time	Points
Less than 15 mins	10
16mins to 1 hour	4
More than 1 hour	2

7. Hours of Study	Points
Less than 10 hours	0
11-15 hrs	10
16 ⁺	20

8. Money Worry	Points
No	10
Yes	0

9.No Prior Qualifications	Points
No	10
Yes	0

10. Considered Changing Programme	Point s
No	0
Yes, and changed	6
Yes, but not changed	10

11. Family expectations played a part	Points
No	10
Yes	0

12. No wish to enter full-time employment	Points
No	0
Yes	8

13. Particular programme	Points
No	8
Yes	0

TOTAL SCORE

Your score

0-30

“Where there is a will, there is a way.”

Your experience here will certainly be challenging. This means that you may well succeed, but will have to continually motivate yourself for the duration of the course.

Study the questionnaire to identify where you scored low numbers of points. Are there any that could be changed? Then seek the advice of your tutor and other lecturers. For example could you reduce your number of hours of employment or increase the number of hours of academic study? Would it be appropriate or helpful to seek funding?

Your tutor and student services coordinator will help you to put together an action plan. If you feel that you need other support (e.g. learning support) discuss this with your tutor.

31-69

You certainly have it within your grasp to succeed. As above, seek a meeting with your tutor and/or lecturers and discuss any areas of the questionnaire in which a score could improve.

Study the questionnaire to identify where you scored low numbers of points. Are there any that could be changed? Then seek the advice of your tutor and other lecturers. For example could you reduce your number of hours of employment or increase the number of hours of academic study? Would it be appropriate or helpful to seek funding?

Your tutor and student services coordinator will help you to put together an action plan. If you feel that you need other support (e.g. learning support) discuss this with your tutor.

70-120
or
more

Well done! You are in a strong position for a successful first year. It is up to you to maintain motivation and keep up with your studies. Take nothing for granted and keep in close contact with your tutor.

'At Risk' Alert RETENTION CHECKLIST - How to Spot a Possible Early Leaver

Initial Warnings										
Late Application/ Enrolment										
or Missed Induction										
Started a Course Before or Failed to Complete										
Below Entry Qualifications										
Requires Special Needs Support										
Lack of initial career planning										
Financial (incoming problems)										
Previous erratic attendance record										
Other Factors										
Early Warnings										
Not punctual										
Not preferred Course										
Poor Motivation										
Poor Participation in Class										
Erratic behaviour/ persistent illness										
Lack of Preparation for Class										
Financial (e.g. long part time working)										
Current erratic attendance										
Social or domestic Pressure/ Problems										
Other Factors										